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Fairy tales.

CHILDREN'S ROOM

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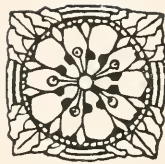




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LABOULAYE'S FAIRY TALES



FAIRY TALES

by
Edouard Laboulaye.

Illustrated by
Arthur A. Dixon.



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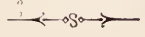
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ROY WITH
CLUB
WASSEL



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FRAGOLETTE



Fragolette

ONCE upon a time there lived near Mantua an orphan girl, who used to go to school every morning with her books and basket. The school was not far, but then the road wound among bushes, and the great trees were (according to the season) full of flowers and fruit, of birds and butterflies. How was it possible not to linger now and then among these wonders of creation?

One day our little scholar perceived a blue butterfly, the prettiest she had ever seen, in the cup of an eglantine blossom. She held her breath; crept forward on the points of her toes; raised her hand softly, and—the butterfly escaped between her fingers! Floating from left to

right in a careless way, he at last perched upon a slope of the road. The young girl followed, but he flew off; then stopped on a flower; then off again; and so on till he led his huntress upon the heights near an enclosure that had a very bad reputation in that neighbourhood. It was there, gossip said, that the fairies danced in the beautiful spring nights, and the witches held their nocturnal meetings in the sombre autumn. Although the walls were so ruined in several places that the débris had fallen in the moat, no Christian dared

to risk himself in the accursed place. But butterflies have no scruples, and children are like butterflies.

Our little traveller with the blue wings entered without ceremony into this garden, which resembled a virgin forest, and our heroine followed, drawn on by the pleasure of the chase. But she had hardly passed a bush when she stopped short and uttered a cry of admiration.

Before her lay a great prairie bordered by immense trees, and the ground was all enamelled with white and red. It was strawberries; the blossoms and the fruit; strawberries without a master, which offered themselves to anyone who chose to profit by this hidden wealth. Good-bye to butterflies! Our little scholar dropped on her two knees on the verdure, and in less than a quarter of an hour she filled her basket. After that she started off at her utmost speed for the school, and arrived there all out of breath, and redder than the strawberries she carried. She was scolded for being late, but she was so proud and delighted she heard nothing. The idea of preaching about rules to conquerors, indeed! At noon she shared her treasures with her little companions, who never ceased admiring her courage and good fortune. She had the air of a queen in the midst of her courtiers. Nothing was wanting to her triumph. They gave her the nick-name of Fragolette, which is the Italian for "little strawberry," and she bore that title all her life. It is, at least, the only name under which she is known in history. To say the truth, there were some timid souls who could not help having a few misgivings. Even while eating the berries, they asked if this might not be a temptation of the evil one to lead them into his power, but these vain rumours were lost in the sounds of victory. No one would listen to them.

But they were wrong not to listen, as you will see by the rest of this story. Delighted with her popularity and her good fortune, Fragolette went every day to the condemned spot, and at last regarded herself as its owner. "It was," she said, "a piece of abandoned land, where all the fruit had been eaten by the blackbirds and tomtits, and a Christian should have at least as much right as the birds."

But one day, as she was picking the berries as usual, she received a terrible blow on the head that stretched her out on the sod.

"Ah, I have caught you, thief!" cried a frightful voice. "Now you've got to pay me."



The broom sped into the air like an arrow (P. 12)

Fragolette, half stunned, tried to rise. She found herself in the presence of a creature who froze her blood with horror. This was an old woman, large, thin, yellow and wrinkled, with red eyes and nose like the beak of a vulture.

From her hideous mouth two teeth projected, longer and sharper than the tusks of a wild boar. Fragolette tried to stammer an excuse, but the old woman, who was a witch, did not deign to listen. She tied the child's hands behind her back, wound a rope seven times around her body, made a slip knot, and put through it the handle of the enormous broom with which she had struck her.

Then, in witch language, she pronounced a few of those horrible words which shake the earth and pale the skies. This done, she mounted the broom, which sped into the air like an arrow, carrying with her the unhappy Fragolette, like a spider at the end of her thread.

If she had known geography, she might have enjoyed the magnificent spectacle spread out in her sight. It was beautiful Italy, bordered by the snowy Alps and the blue sea, and traversed by the verdant slopes of the Appennines. But in those days women plied the distaff in their own homes, and did not concern themselves with what was going on in China or Peru. Geography was of little account to them. And, for that matter, the poor child was too frightened to open her eyes. She might have passed even over Vesuvius and Etna without seeing them. She was more dead than alive when the magic broom descended to the earth in the midst of the forests of Sicily.

"At last, little thief," said the witch, as she lifted her up by the hair. "Now you belong to me, go to work, go and set the table in the dining-room. How soon I would eat you if you were not so thin," added she, pinching the child's arms; "but with me people grow fat quickly, and you will lose nothing by waiting."

With this grim joke she opened her great mouth, and licked her lips with a smile which made poor Fragolette shiver all over.

The dinner was not very gay, as you may think. Fragolette's share was but a crust of bread. Then she threw herself, all in tears, on a wretched mattress in a corner. Happily she was at that age when sleep is stronger than sorrow, and had hardly lain down when she went to sleep.

The day after this sad adventure the slavery of Fragolette

commenced. Each day she had to sweep and scrub the house, cook the meals, serve the table, wash the dishes, and what was worse, aid at the toilet of her horrible mistress. During entire hours the child was exhausted in trying to curl the three hairs that the witch had on her head. It was happy for her if, when all was done, she escaped without three or four blows.

Yet, spite of this hard life, Fragolette grew prettier each day—I wish I could say she grew better—but she was not one of those mild creatures who accept blows and kiss the hand that strikes them. No; the blood boiled in her veins, and she dreamed only of revenge. The old witch noticed this. One is always afraid of those whom they have wronged. She often asked herself if the girl might not strangle her some day while she helped at her toilet, and she thought it would be wise for her to prevent the chance.

One day when Fragolette looked prettier than usual, envy and anger gnawed the witch's heart.

"Take this basket," she said to the young girl, "go to the fountain, and bring it back to me full of water, if not, I shall eat you!"

The girl ran quickly. She imagined that the basket was enchanted, and that the witch, according to her custom, was amusing herself by frightening her. She plunged the basket into the fountain, but when she drew it up the water ran through it as though it were a sieve. Three times she tried in vain, and then she comprehended that the witch meant to kill her. Furious and despairing, she leaned against the fountain and burst into tears. All at once she heard a soft voice which called her.

"Fragolette! Fragolette! why do you weep?"

She raised her head and saw a handsome young man, who looked at her tenderly.

"Who are you," she said, "who know my name?"

"I am the son of the witch, and my name is Belèbon. I know that your death is desired, but it shall not be, I promise you. Give me one kiss, and I will fill your basket."

"Kiss the son of the witch, never!" said Fragolette, proudly.

"Ah, well, I will not be so hard as you," said the young man.

He breathed three times on the basket, and then plunging it into the fountain, drew it out full of water. Not a drop escaped.

Fragolette went back to the house, and without a word placed the basket on the table. The witch grew pale as death.

"Are you too one of our trade?" she said, looking keenly into the girl's eyes. Then striking her forehead, she said: "You have seen Belèbon. He has helped you. Confess it."

"You ought to know, since you are a witch."

For a reply the witch gave her such a blow that she was obliged to hold fast to the table to keep from falling.

"Good, good!" said the old witch, "we'll see who'll carry the day. He laughs best who laughs last."

The next day the witch said to Fragolette:

"I am going to take a turn in Africa, and I will come back this evening. You see this sack of wheat? You must have that made into loaves, and baked on my return. You will not find this task any more difficult than to carry water in a basket. If it is not done, take care of yourself."

Saying this, seemingly she locked the door and left.

"This time I am lost," cried the young girl. "Can I grind the flour, make the bread and bake it? I have neither a mill nor oven, and I have no time."

Then she beat frantically on the door in a vain effort to escape.

It was Belèbon who opened it.

"Fragolette! Fragolette," said he, "this does no good. Give me one kiss, and I will take care of the bread and you will be saved."

"Kiss the son of a witch," cried Fragolette, trembling, "never!"

"You have no pity, Fragolette. Nevertheless, I cannot let you die."

He whistled, and the rats and the mice ran out from all the holes in the house. The rats carried the wheat to

the mill and came running back with a sack of flour. The mice turned bakers, and the rats heated the oven. When the witch returned all was baked, and the golden loaves piled up to the ceiling.

"Wretch," she said, "you have seen Belèbon! He has helped you; confess it!"

"You ought to know, since you are a witch," she said.

The witch strove to strike her, but Fragolette dodged the blow, and her enemy fell with her nose on the table and grew all blue with rage and pain.

"Good," she said, "we'll see who'll beat. Who laughs last, laughs best."

Two days later the old witch put on a smiling air and called Fragolette.

"My child, go and see my sister, and ask for her strong-box, and bring it to me."

"How do I know where your sister lives, and what is her name?"

"Nothing is easier," said the witch. "You go straight on till you come to a stream that runs across the road. You pass by the ford, and a little further you will see an old château with an iron fence. There is where my sister Viperine lives. Go, and hurry back, my child."

"A miracle," thought Fragolette; "the old thing is in a good humour."

Saying this she started out with a light step, and met Belèbon out in the road.

"Where are you going this morning?" he asked.

"I am going to the sister of my mistress to ask for a strong-box."

"Unhappy one," cried Belèbon, "they are sending you to your death. No living creature has ever left the château of Viperine. But I can save you. Give me a kiss and I will answer for all."

"No, I will never kiss the son of a witch."

"Fragolette, you are ungrateful, but I love you more than myself, and I will save you in spite of yourself. Listen well to me. When you get to the banks of the stream say, 'Beautiful river, let me cross on your silvery tide.'

Then take this bottle of oil, this bread, this cord, and this little broom. When you get to the fence of the old château rub the hinges of the gate with oil. It will fly open of itself. Then a great dog will spring out, barking. Throw him the bread and he will stop. In the courtyard you will see a poor woman who is obliged to draw pails of water out of a well by the long locks of her hair. Give her the rope. Go on then into the kitchen, and you will find another woman who is forced to polish the stove with her tongue. Give her the little broom. Then you may enter the room where Viperine sleeps. The strong-box is upon the top of the clothes-press, take it and fly as fast as possible. If you attend to all this you will save your life."

Fragolette did not forget anything that Belèbon had said. On the bank of the stream she cried, "Beautiful river, let me pass over on your silvery tide." And the nymph of the river replied, in the softest voice, "Pass, sweet young lady." And the waves separated so that she passed over dry shod. The gate, rubbed with oil, opened of its own accord. The dog snatched the bread, then turned and stretched himself out with his head on his two paws, and cast an affectionate glance at Fragolette. The two women took with joy the presents she brought them, and our heroine entered, without noise, into the chamber of Viperine, who lay there snoring. She ran to the clothes-press and took the strong-box. Her heart beat fast, and she believed that she was safe. When all at once Viperine waked, Fragolette was already on the stairs.

"Ho, there!" cried Viperine. "Cook! kill that thief!"

"Not I," answered her victim; "she has given me a broom, while you condemned me to polish the stove with my tongue."

"Woman at the well!" cried the witch, "take this thief and drown her."

"Not I," answered this victim; "she has given me a rope, while you condemned me to draw up water with my hair."

"Dog, eat her."

"Not I," said the dog, without raising his head;

"she has given me bread, while you let me die of hunger."

"Gate, shut her in."

"Not I," said the gate, "she has oiled my hinges, while you let me spoil with rust."

The witch made but one jump to the bottom of the stairs, but the gate, happy at having such liberty of movement, kept swinging backward and forward on its two hinges, and, at the very moment Viperine went to go out, it closed so abruptly that she came near being shut in it and crushed.

Fragolette ran without looking behind her, but in her flight she did not forget to offer her compliments to the river, and passed as she had done before. Viperine was just behind her.

"Get out, dirty stream!" she cried; "open a way, or I will dry you up."

The stream opened, but, all at once, when Viperine was in the midst of it, the waves rose, crept over the witch, and drowned her in an instant. The nymph was avenged.

Once more at home, Fragolette gave the strong-box to her terrible mistress. One can imagine what a face the old witch made. "It is a new trick of Belèbon," she thought, "but I know how to revenge it. He who laughs last, laughs best."

That same evening she made Fragolette stay and go to bed in her room.

"You must remain here," she said to her. "In the hennery are three cocks. One is red, the other is black, and the third is white. To-night, when one of these cocks crows, you must tell me which it is. Take care of a mistake; I will only make one mouthful of you."

"Belèbon will not be there," Fragolette said to herself, "I am lost." And she did not close her eyes for a single instant.

At midnight a cock crowed.

"Which one is this that has crowed?" asked the witch.

"Belèbon," murmured Fragolette, "tell me which crowed."

"Give me a kiss," murmured a voice, "and I will tell you."

"No."

"Cruel one—but I do not want you to die! It is the red cock that crowed." The witch is by her bed. She approaches Fragolette.

"Answer, or I'll eat you!"

"It is the red cock that crowed," Fragolette answered, trembling.

And the witch went back to her bed, grumbling.

At the same instant another cock-crow was heard.

"Which cock was that?" cried the witch.

And Belèbon whispered the answer to his well-beloved.

And the old witch went back to her bed, grumbling.

At the break of day they heard once more the crow of a cock.

"Belèbon, help me?" cried Fragolette.

"Give me a kiss," he said, "I've had enough of your scruples!"

And there was the witch coming toward her with her cruel mouth wide open.

"Belèbon," cried the girl, "if you abandon me, you will be my murderer."

"It's the white cock that crows," answered Belèbon, who could not resist her.

"It's the white cock!" cried Fragolette.

"No matter, traitress," cried the witch in anger, "your hour is come. You must die!"

She sprang on her prey. But Fragolette, young and agile, escaped from her, opened a window and jumped out into the garden. The witch followed in a fury. But she did not manage well, for her foot caught on the window and she fell, head first, and broke out at one blow her two great tusks. In these two tusks lay all her power and life, so that only a corpse was found on the ground in the garden.

Left alone with Belèbon, Fragolette often asked herself what would become of her. She was an orphan and all must have forgotten her. To stay in the house where she

had suffered so much. Oh! she could not think of that either. Belèbon said nothing. He was happy at finding himself near Fragolette and did not dare consider the future.

But one day Fragolette came to him to ask for her liberty. Belèbon could not refuse her anything, but he recalled to the ungrateful girl all he had done for her, and offered her his heart with his hand.

“No,” said Fragolette, “I could not marry the son of a witch.”

“Go then,” said poor Belèbon, “go, since nothing will keep you; but before leaving me to mourn in this house far from you, give me one proof of friendship—the only one I shall ever receive from you. Lay your hand in mine and pardon me the sin of my birth. Then we will separate like two strangers.”

She held out her hand, and he took it and covered it with tears and kisses. She did not draw it away, and she regarded him with a singular glance.

“Good-bye, Fragolette,” said Belèbon, “you take with you my happiness and my life. Happy, a thousand times happy, will be the one to whom you shall give this hand.”

“Ah, well,” said she, “since you have taken it—keep it.”

He raised his head, and clasped her in his arms with sobs. And she, the elf, she took his head and kissed his brow, and began to laugh and cry at once. One can never know what is passing in the heart of a woman. Two days after, they were married.

THE GOOD WOMAN

(A NORWEGIAN STORY)

CHAPTER I



Gudbrand carried off the goose

(P. 22)

ONCE upon a time there was a farmer named Gudbrand, who lived in a lonely farmhouse, situated on a hill; so he went by the name of "Gudbrand of the Hill." Now this farmer had an excellent wife, as often happens, but, what is very unusual, Gudbrand knew the value of such a treasure. Accordingly, the couple lived in perfect harmony, rejoicing in their mutual happiness, and without anxiety about the future. Whatever

Whatever Gudbrand did, his wife had thought of and wished for beforehand, so much so that her husband could do nothing without his partner thanking him for having divined and forestalled her wishes.

Their life besides was an easy one; the farm was their own, and they had a hundred crowns in the dresser, and two fine cows in the byre. They wanted for nothing, and could grow old peacefully, without needing assistance from anyone.

One evening as they were conversing together about their work and their projects, the wife said to her husband—

“My love, I think you ought to take one of the cows and sell it in the town. The one we keep will give us sufficient milk and butter, and why need we wish for more? We have no children. Had we not better spare ourselves all extra work now we are growing old? You will always find plenty of furniture and tools to repair, and I shall have more time to sit beside you with my distaff.”

Gudbrand agreed with his wife, as he always did, and the very next day he went to the town with the cow he intended to sell; but it was not a market day, and he found no purchaser.

“Never mind!” said Gudbrand, “at the worst I shall have nothing to do but take my cow home again. I have enough hay and litter for the beast, and the road is no longer one way than the other.”

Upon which he quietly retraced his steps homeward. At the end of some hours, when he was beginning to feel very tired, he met a man leading a horse to the town, a powerful-looking animal, saddled and bridled.

“The road is long, and the night is coming on,” thought Gudbrand; “I shall never get my cow home, and to-morrow I shall have to take the same journey over again. Now here is a horse which would suit me much better, and I should reach home as fresh as a lark. How pleased my old wife would be to see me come back in triumph like a Roman emperor!”

Whereupon he stopped the horsedealer, and exchanged his cow for the horse. When once he was mounted, he began to regret his bargain. Gudbrand was old and heavy, whilst the horse was young and skittish. At the end of half an hour the rider was walking on foot, holding the bridle over his arm, and dragging the horse after him, tossing its mane in the wind and slying at every stone in the road.

“This is a bad bargain,” thought he; and at that moment he caught sight of a peasant driving before him a fat pig. “A nail is of use, and is worth more than a diamond which

only sparkles and is useless," said Gudbrand; "my wife often says so."

He then exchanged the horse for the pig.

It was a happy inspiration, but the good man had reckoned without his host. Piggy was tired and disinclined to move. Gudbrand remonstrated, prayed, and swore, but all in vain. He dragged the pig by its snout, he pushed it from behind, and he beat it, but it was labour lost. The pig lay down in the dust like a vessel stranded in the mud.

The farmer was in despair, when a man passed him leading a goat, which ran and leaped in a most engaging manner.

"That is what I want!" cried Gudbrand; "that lively goat pleases me far more than this grunting pig, stupid beast." So without more ado he exchanged the pig for the goat.

All went well for the first half-hour. His new purchase dragged Gudbrand after her to his great amusement, but when a man is no longer young, he soon grows tired of climbing over rocks; so the farmer meeting a shepherd with his flock had no hesitation in bartering his goat for a sheep.

"I shall have as much milk," he said to himself, "and this beast at least will keep quiet, and will not disturb either my wife or myself."

Gudbrand was right; nothing could be more quiet than the sheep. It had no tricks and never butted, but it stood stock still and baa-ed incessantly after its companions, and the more Gudbrand dragged it away the more pitifully it baa-ed.

"Stupid beast," cried Gudbrand; "it is as obstinate and melancholy as my neighbour's wife. Who will take this wretched bleating sheep off my hands? I would be thankful to be rid of it at any price."

"That is a bargain, if you choose, old fellow," said a peasant who was passing.

"Take this fine fat goose in exchange for that miserable sheep which is at death's door."

"Agreed," said Gudbrand, "a live goose is better than a dead sheep"; so he carried off the goose. This was no



Gudbrand exchanged the horse for a pig (P. 22)

easy task, for he found the bird a troublesome companion. Uncomfortable at no longer being on foot, it fought with its beak and claws and wings, and Gudbrand was soon tired out by the struggle.

"Ugh!" said he, "the goose is a troublesome bird; my wife never cared to have one about the house." Upon which at the first farm he came to he exchanged the goose for a handsome cock, with fine plumage and spurs.

This time he was satisfied. The cock, it is true, from time to time crowed with a voice too hoarse to please delicate ears, but as its feet were tied, and its head hung down, it resigned itself to its fate and kept quiet. The only trouble was that it was getting late. Gudbrand, who had set out before dawn, found himself in the evening hungry and without any money. He had a long road still before him, and feeling faint for want of food, he took an heroic resolve. At the first road-side inn he came to, he sold the cock for half a crown, and as he had a good appetite, he spent the last halfpenny of it in satisfying his hunger.

"After all," thought he, "what use would a cock be to me if I had died of hunger."

As he drew near home, the farmer began to reflect on the singular way in which his journey had turned out. Before going indoors, he stopped at the house of his neighbour, Peter Graybeard, as he was called thereabouts.

"Well, gossip," said Graybeard, "how did your business in the town prosper?"

"So so," replied Gudbrand; "I cannot say I have been lucky, but, on the other hand, I cannot complain." And he related all that had happened to him.

"Neighbour," said Peter, "you have done a good day's work; what a warm reception you will get from your wife. Heaven preserve you! I would not be in your shoes!"

"Well," said Gudbrand of the Hill, "things might have turned out worse for me, but at present I am quite easy in my mind. Whether I was right or wrong, my wife is so good that she will not say a word about what I have done."

"I hear what you say, neighbour, and I envy you; but,

with all respect, allow me to say that I do not believe a word of it."

"Will you bet that I am mistaken?" said Gudbrand. "I have a hundred crowns in the drawer of my dresser, and I will risk twenty. Will you do as much on your side?"

"Certainly," said Peter; "let us decide it at once."

The bargain being concluded, the two friends entered Gudbrand's house, but Peter stayed at the door of the room to listen to the old couple.

"Good evening, old wife," said Gudbrand.

"Good evening," replied the good woman. "Is it you, my friend? Heaven be praised! How have you sped?"

"Neither well nor ill," answered Gudbrand; "when I reached the town, I found nobody to buy a cow, so I exchanged it for a horse."

"For a horse!" said the wife, "that is capital! I am so glad! We shall now be able to go to church in a cart, and people who are no better than ourselves need no longer look down upon us. If we choose to keep a horse, I consider we have every right to do so. Where is the horse? It must be put into the stable."

"I have not brought it home," said Gudbrand, "for I changed my mind on the way, and I exchanged the horse for a pig."

"Well, now," said the wife, "that is just what I should have done. A thousand thanks! Now, when my neighbours come to see me, I shall have some ham to offer them. What do we want with a horse? People would say, 'See how stuck up they are; they are too proud to go to church on foot!' But the pig must be put into the sty."

"I have not brought home the pig," said Gudbrand, "for on the road I exchanged it for a goat."

"Well done!" said the good woman. "What a thoughtful man you are! When I think of it, what should I have done with a pig? People would have pointed at us and said: 'Look at those people, they eat up all they gain'; but with my goat I shall have milk and cheese, not to mention kids. Be quick and put the goat in the stable."

"I have not brought home the goat either," said Gudbrand, "for on the road home I exchanged it for a sheep."

"That is just like you," said the good wife; "you are so thoughtful for me, because I am too old to be running over hill and dale after a goat, but a sheep will give me wool and milk. Let us put it at once into the shed."

"I have not brought home the sheep either," returned Gudbrand; "I exchanged it on the way for a goose."

"Thanks, thanks, with all my heart!" said the good wife. "What should I have done with a sheep? I have neither loom nor spinning-wheel; besides it is hard work weaving, and when that is done, there is still the cutting out and sewing to do. It is simpler to buy our clothes as we have always done; but a goose—a fat goose—is what I have always wanted. I want some down for our quilt, and for a long time I have had a fancy to dine off roast goose. You must shut up the goose in the fowl-house."

"I have not brought home the goose either," said Gudbrand, "on the way I exchanged it for a cock."

"Dearest!" said the good woman, "you are wiser than I. A cock is capital; it is far better than a clock that has to be wound up every week. A cock crows every morning at four o'clock, and tells us that it is time to rise. But what should we do with a goose? I do not understand cookery, and as for my quilt, thank goodness, we have no lack of moss as soft as down. You must put the cock in the fowl-house."

"I have not brought home the cock either," said Gudbrand, "for at sunset I felt as hungry as a hunter, and I was obliged to sell the cock for half a crown; for if I had not done so, I should have died of hunger."

"Heaven be praised that you had the cock to sell," said the excellent woman; "whatever you do, Gudbrand, is sure to please me. What do you want of a cock? We are our own masters, I fancy; no one can order us about, and we can stay in bed as late as we please. You are here dearest, and that is all I want to make me quite happy. I only need one thing, which is to feel you near me."

Thereupon, Gudbrand opened the door, and cried out—
“Well, neighbour Peter, what do you say to that? Go home and fetch your twenty crowns!”

He then kissed his old wife on both cheeks with as much pleasure and more tenderness than if she had been still twenty.

CHAPTER II

PETER GRAYBEARD did not at all resemble his neighbour Gudbrand. He was ungenial, imperious, and hot-tempered, and had no more patience than a dog whose bone has been taken away, or than a cat that is being strangled. He would have been insufferable, had not Heaven in its mercy given him a wife worthy of him. She was self-willed, peevish, and nagging; always silent when her husband said nothing, and ready to find fault as soon as he opened his mouth. It was a great piece of good fortune for Peter to possess such a treasure, for if it had not been for his wife, he would never have learned the great lesson—that patience and meekness are the first of virtues.

One day, in hay-making time, when he came home, after fifteen hours' hard work, in a worse temper than usual, he called for his supper, and on being told it was not yet ready, he began grumbling and raving at wives and their laziness.

“Good gracious, Peter,” said his wife; “it is very easy for you to talk. Would you like us to change places? To-morrow I will go and make hay instead of you, and you shall do the house-work for me. We shall then see which of us two has the hardest work and which gets through it best.”

“That is a bargain!” exclaimed Peter. “You must learn by experience once for all what we poor husbands have to suffer, and that will teach you more respect—a lesson which you stand much in need of.”

On the morrow at daybreak the wife set off with a rake over her shoulder and a sickle at her side, pleased with a prospect of a day in the open air, and singing at the top of her voice.

Peter Graybeard was a little surprised to find himself alone in the house; but he was anxious not to prove himself mistaken; so he set to work to churn the butter, as if he had never done anything else in his life.

It is warm work trying one's hand at a new trade, and Peter soon found his throat very dry, and went down to the cellar to draw some beer from the cask. He had just taken out the bung, and was about to put in the tap, when he heard grunts overhead. The pig was loose in the kitchen.

"My butter will be spoiled!" cried Graybeard as he mounted the stairs four at a time, holding the tap in his hand. What a sight met his view! The churn was upset, the cream all spilled upon the floor, and the pig was disporting himself in the midst.

A wiser man than Peter might have lost patience. He threw himself on the intruder, who rushed away grunting, but Peter prevented its escape, and struck it such a well-directed blow on the head with the tap that it fell down dead on the spot.

When he drew back, his weapon all stained with blood, Peter remembered that he had not stopped the bung-hole of the cask, and that the beer was still running; so he rushed to the cellar. However, the beer was no longer running, but only because there was not a drop left in the cask.

He had now to begin his work over again and churn the butter. Peter returned to the dairy, where there was still enough cream to repair the accident, and he set to work to churn his hardest.

Whilst he was churning, he remembered, though it was rather too late to do so, that the cow was still in the cowshed, and that she had had nothing to eat or drink, though by this time the sun was high in the heavens. Accordingly, he was about to run to the cowshed, but experience had made him careful, and he said to himself—

"There is my youngster rolling on the ground; if I leave the churn, the boy will be sure to upset it, and an accident soon happens." So he slung the churn at his back and went to draw water for the cow.

The well was deep, and the bucket took a long time in descending; so Peter, who was growing impatient, leaned upon the cord to hasten the process, when souse went the milk over his head out of the churn as it poured into the well.

"I shall certainly have no butter to-day," said Peter; "I must see after the cow. It is too late now to take it to the field, but there is a good crop of grass on the thatch of our house, and the beast will lose nothing by staying at home."

When he had taken the cow out of the shed, he found no difficulty in making it mount upon the roof. The house was built in a hollow, and its roof being nearly on a level with the adjacent slope, Peter threw a broad plank across between, and so installed the cow on its elevated pasture.

Peter could not stay on the roof to watch the animal, for he had to make the soup and carry it to the haymakers, but he had become careful now, and would not risk the cow breaking its bones; so tying round its neck a cord, which he passed down the kitchen chimney, he went indoors and ingeniously tied the end of the cord round his own leg.

"In this way," he thought, "I am quite sure the animal cannot get into mischief."

He then filled the great pot with meat, vegetables, and water, and lighted the fire, when all of a sudden the cow slipped off the roof, and drew poor Peter up the chimney, with his head downwards and his feet in the air.

What would have become of him it is impossible to say, if by good fortune a great iron bar had not arrested his further progress; and there they both hung suspended between heaven and earth, uttering frightful cries.

Luckily the housewife was not more patient than her husband. When she had waited three minutes to see if her dinner was being brought at the proper time, she ran home as though intending to set the house on fire. Catching sight of the cow hanging from the roof, she took her sickle and cut the cord, to the great relief of the poor beast, who was delighted to find itself once more on *terra firma*. It was no less fortunate for Peter too, who was not accustomed

to gaze at the sky with his feet in the air. Down he fell into the soup head foremost; but fortune favoured him that day, the fire had not burned up, and the water was cold, so that Graybeard escaped with only a cut on his forehead, and the skin taken off his nose. Fortunately, nothing was



*The cow slipped off the roof and drew poor Peter
up the chimney (P. 30)*

broken but the pot. When his wife entered the kitchen and found her husband dripping wet, and with blood flowing from the wound on his forehead, she exclaimed:

“There now; am I not always in the right? Here have I been haymaking, and you see I am just the same

as usual; and you, Master Cook, Master Cowherd, Master Housekeeper, where is the butter? where is the pig? where is the cow? and where is our dinner? If the baby is not killed, it certainly is not your fault. Poor little thing! What would become of you if you had not your mother to look after you?"

Upon this she set to work to cry and sob. Peter bowed to the storm in silence, and he did wisely, for resignation becomes lofty souls, but some days after, the neighbours remarked that he had altered the sign over the door. In the place of two hands clasping a heart, and surmounted with lambent flames, he had painted a bee-hive surrounded with bees, and below it the following inscription: —

"Bees sting much,
But wicked tongues more."

This was all the revenge he took on his wife.

Such is the story of Gudbrand's wife and the wife of Graybeard.

THE FLEECE OF GOLD

(A SERVIAN STORY)



*There sprang from the woods
an enormous ram* (P. 35)

AT Kronjevatz there was once a hunter known by the name of Ivan Lazarévitch. He was the king of the mountains. Although he had only a small house surrounded by an orchard, he lived there in happiness and plenty with his wife and child. His bees gave him honey, his plum trees the best brandy in the land, and, thanks to his rifle, his table never lacked game. The rich have fields, mines, and treasures. Ianko had his in the forest. Hares, roebucks, and stags belonged to him for ten miles round, and when

one wanted a beautiful bear's skin or a handsome skin of a fox at Belgrade, Pest, or Constantinople, they wrote to Ianko, the hunter of Kronjevatz.

Happiness is like the flower of the field, it fades in a morning. One beautiful night in autumn, Ianko was lying low in wait for his game, when he perceived in the distance a strange light. The trees of the forest grew clear one after

another, as if in the light of a furnace, then they became dark again, as the light advanced always. At the same time he heard the noise of a heavy tread on the earth and the crashing of branches. To leave his refuge and run to find out all about it, was for Ianko the work of an instant. All at once there sprang out from the wood an enormous ram, whose eyes darted flames, and whose fleece sparkled like the rays of the sun. Ianko took his carabine, but quicker than lightning the animal turned on him and threw him down.

The next day at dawn, some wood-cutters, who were on their way to their wood-yard, found the poor hunter extended on the earth and already cold in death. He had two deep wounds in his breast, from which had escaped his life blood. The wood-cutters bore into the village the body of their brave comrade; he was buried, and all was finished. In the happy home which Ianko had made echo with his joyous songs, there was only heard the groans of the widow and the sobs of a child.

Glad or sorrowful, the years pass, carrying with them our sorrow or our joy. As Stoian, the son of Ianko, became a man, his first desire was the chase. He had in his veins the blood of his father, and, as a child, his greatest joy had been to touch the carabine of the hunter that hung on the wall. But the day when he asked his mother to give him this unlucky weapon and let him go into the forest, the poor woman began to weep.

"No, no, my child; on no account would I give you this weapon. I have already lost my husband. Do you wish that I should lose my son?"

Stoian was silent, and embraced his mother, but the next day he returned to the charge. He was so tender and so caressing, he promised to be so prudent, that she finished by yielding.

Early in the morning, Stoian, intoxicated with joy, hastened to the mountains. He hunted all day, and in the evening he placed himself in the very spot where his father had been found dead.

The night was dark. The young hunter was tired and fell asleep in spite of himself, when a great noise woke him.

He saw the trees of the forest illumined one after another, as if by a furnace fire, he heard the tread on the earth and the crash of broken branches. Without quitting his shelter, Stoian took his gun and recommended himself to God. All at once there sprang from the woods an enormous ram, with flames darting from his eyes and his fleece sparkling like the rays of the sun.

"Stoian!" he cried, "I have killed your father, and I am going to kill you."

"Not yet," cried the young man, "with the help of God it is I who will kill you."

His aim was so exact, that the animal, struck between his two eyes, made one bound and fell as if by a thunderbolt.

Then appeared, all at once, at his side, a grand looking woman, with black hair and green eyes. This was Vila, the fairy of the forests.

"Stoian," she said, "you have delivered me from an enemy; take my hand. I am your sister. When you have need of aid, call on me."

The young hunter thanked the lady, and descended to Kronjevatz, proud and happy at his hunt. Hung on the wall, the fleece of the ram illumined the whole room. All in the province came to admire it, and Stoian was proclaimed king of the mountains, as his father had been. There was not a young girl who did not smile on him as he passed by.

At this time the Turks were at war with Servia. Reschid, the pashaw of Belgrade, was an old janizary who, perhaps, had been brave in his day, but he was now only a fat, conceited old man, who spent his life in smoking, drinking, and eating. To govern a people whose language, religion, and manners he despised, he had near him a renegade who had come from no one knew where; one of those miscreants, without faith or law, who live only by theft and crime. Yacob was the name of this honest man, and he had a low brow, a nose crooked as the beak of an eagle, and ten fingers more crooked than his nose. Of all the words in his language, that which he knew best was the verb "to take." He could conjugate that in all its moods and tenses. As to the verb "to give back," he ignored it.

It is said in a common proverb, that a Turk makes more havoc than six wolves, and that a renegade, in this respect, is worth six Turks. Yacob did not prove this proverb a lie. One day Reschid had come to hunt in the mountains, and Yacob, according to his custom, went to work to collect the tax for his profit. We will say, to do him justice, that he did give something to his master, who gave nothing to the Sultan.

On entering the house of Stoian, he was astounded at the golden fleece. His eyes shone with covetousness, his hands contracted.

"My son," he said to the young hunter, "this is an admirable fleece. The pashaw ought to know all the beasts in his forest. Go and take him the fleece of this ram. It belongs to him."

"The fleece is mine," said Stoian. "I do not wish to give it to any one."

"Who talked of giving?" said Yacob. "With the great ones of the earth all is exchange. The pashaw, my master and yours, is too generous to rest under an obligation."

"I shall not sell it; I shall keep it," answered Stoian.

"Weigh your words, young man," said Yacob, with a frown. "Pride carries misfortune, and the pashaw has a long arm. I wish this fleece, and I will have it."

For an answer Stoian cocked his gun and showed the renegade the door.

"Don't trouble yourself, my son," said Yacob, making a rapid exit. "Perhaps you will regret not following my advice some day."

Re-entering the palace, the renegade found Reschid, who was drinking a glassful of the white wine of Semendria.

"Taste this wine," he said to Yacob. "If the cadis tasted such, they would change their Koran for a bottle."

"The flavour is excellent," answered Yacob, "but it is not equal to the white wine I have drunk in Smyrna. It is true that the pashaw there owns a vine that gives grapes that cannot be equalled.

"He is very happy," said Reschid, going on with his drinking.

“What prevents your being as happy?” said Yacob. “There is in this country a certain Stoian, a sort of sorcerer, who in eight days can plant a vine and raise you just such grapes. But perhaps he would make conditions.”



“Don’t trouble yourself,” said Yacob, making a rapid exit
(P. 36)

“Conditions!” cried the Turk, shrugging his shoulders. “What if one should send him a janizary and declare to him that if I did not have, in eight days, a wine as beautiful

as that in Smyrna, and grapes just as fine, I would have his head chopped off, eh?"

"There is nothing to answer to such an argument," said Yacob, with a great laugh, and he added, in a low voice, "the golden fleece is mine."

When Stoian heard the sorrowful news, he began to weep.

"Alas! my mother, we are lost."

"My son," said the poor woman, "did I not say that this gun would cost you your life, as it has cost the life of your father?"

In despair the young man went out, walking without aim he cared not whither. At the foot of the mountain a young girl passed him.

"Brother," she said, "why do you weep?"

"God keep you," answered Stoian, brusquely, "you can do nothing to help me."

"How do you know?" answered she; "one finds out friends by proving them."

The hunter raised his head and recognized Vila, the fairy of the mountain. He threw himself weeping into her arms, and told her all the vileness of Yacob and the folly of the pashaw.

"Is that all?" said the fairy. "Take courage, my brother, I'll help you. Go find the pashaw and ask him where he wishes the vine planted. Tell him that it is necessary to dig the furrows. Take then a sprig of basilica, plant it in the turf, and sleep tranquilly. Before eight days you will pick ripe grapes?"

Stoian did as Vila commanded. On the first day he planted a sprig of basilica; but he had not much confidence in the promises of the fairy, and he went to sleep with a full heart. Rising before the sun, he ran to the first furrow. The roots commenced to pierce the earth. The second day they had grown much more, the third the leaves opened, the fourth the vines bloomed. On the sixth day, though it was yet spring-time, the grapes were golden. Stoian picked and pressed them, and carried to his terrible master a flask of sweet wine and a plate of ripe grapes. At view

of this marvellous vintage all were astonished except the pashaw, who found the thing very natural, and did not even thank poor Stoian. Nothing is more easy, says the proverb, than to catch serpents by the hand of another.

"Eh, well," said Reschid to Yacob, "what do you think of my power? I am not a sorcerer, I pride myself. When one has a sword in the hand one needs to know nothing and to have nothing; the gold and the wisdom of others are all yours."

"I admire the genius of your highness," said Yacob, with a low bow, "so I hope the work will not be left unfinished."

"What is wanting to my vine?" demanded Reschid, with a discontented air.

"There is needed the tower of ivory which at Smyrna excites the admiration of believers and the despair of infidels."

"Only that," said the pashaw, laughing. "Approach, young man. If in a month I have not a tower of ivory like the one in Smyrna I will cut off your head. You have heard. Obey."

Stoian ran to his mother in tears.

"Alas! my mother, we are lost."

"Go, my son, run to the mountains. Perhaps you will find there our protectress and friend."

The young man ran to the mountains and called the fairy three times. She came to him, with a smiling air, and listened to him with tenderness.

"Is that all?" she said. "Courage, my brother! Count on me. Go to the pashaw, demand of him a vessel, three hundred hogsheads of wine, two hundred measures of brandy and a dozen carpenters. Once embarked, sail straight on. When you come between two mountains, disembark, empty the tank you will see before you, and fill it up with the wine and brandy. When the elephants come there in the evening to quench their thirst, they will drink till they fall dead drunk. The carpenters will saw off their tusks, and you will soon have a full cargo. Come back to the vine with your conquest; take with you a sprig of basilica, and

sleep tranquilly in your new garden. In eight days the tower will be finished."

Stoian did all as Vila commanded. The vessel stopped between the two mountains. They emptied the tank, and filled it with wine and brandy.

At the break of day the elephants came running in a troop. The first who tasted the brandy seemed astonished, but he returned to it with a certain pleasure, and each of the others did the same. Then there was a joy, a noise, a universal tumult. All the elephants were on a carouse. In defiance of all etiquette, the king of the elephants danced a variety dance, while the queen waltzed with a young courtier. Then the whole company fell in a heavy sleep, and the carpenters commenced their work. Do not blush for your misbehaviour, good elephants, you are not the first who have been robbed in intoxication, and you will not be the last.

On returning to his country, Stoian arranged in the garden this enormous mass of ivory. Concealed behind a wall, Yacob spied the young hunter to find out his secret. But Stoian passed the whole day in singing plaintive songs and playing on the guitar. When night cast its veil on the earth, nothing was done. Yacob retired, rubbing his hands. "He is lost," he said, "the fleece of gold is mine."

But on the morrow the tower of ivory left the ground: the second day, it had mounted to the first story. The sixth, it was finished, with its dome and minarets.

For ten miles round it was seen shining in the sun, whiter than the sea lit by a silvery moon.

At view of this marvellous edifice everyone was astonished except the pashaw, who found the whole thing quite natural, and did not even thank the poor Stoian.

"Ah, well," said he to Yacob, toying with the handle of his poniard, "what do you think of my power?"

"I admire the genius of your highness," answered Yacob, bowing. "I hope the work will not be left incomplete."

"Is there anything wanting in my ivory tower?" demanded Reschid, with a discontented air.

"The Princess of India is lacking," said Yacob. "Of

what use is the tower of ivory if it does not enclose the most beautiful of creatures?"

"You are right," answered the pashaw, "it is the bird who makes the cage valuable. Draw near, young man," said he to Stoian. "Go search for the Princess of India. If you come back without her, I will have your head taken off. You hear me; obey!"

Stoian ran to his mother, weeping.

"Alas, my mother, we are lost! You will never see your child again."

"Go, my son, run to the mountain. Perhaps you will find there our protectress and friend."

The young man ran to the mountain and called the fairy three times. She came with a smiling air, and listened to him with tenderness.

"Is that all?" said she. "Have courage, my brother. I will help you. Go find the pashaw, and demand a great fleet. In the vessels establish a dozen beautiful shops, and put in them the stuffs and the jewels that one sees only in the bazaars of Constantinople. In these shops install, as merchants, a dozen of the handsomest young men of Servia, and dress them as princes. Then go on, and when the vessels stop between two mountains, you may land. You will be in the kingdom of India. There, take your guitar and sing, with your companions, and when the daughters of the land come to the fountain, invite them to look at the wealth of your fleet. Make them presents, and they will be charmed with your generosity. When they go back they will say, 'There has never been seen such a beautiful fleet, more rich treasures, or more amiable merchants.' Being a woman and a princess, the daughter of the king of India will be doubly curious. She will come to see you; amuse her all day, but as soon as night comes, lift anchor and spread sail. When the princess is on your vessel all is not done. For she can work magic and can lead you into more than one danger. But follow my counsel, and take courage."

Saying this, the fairy approached a stream that descended down the mountain, and called a salmon that came

running to her. She took off a scale, which she gave to Stoian.

"Take this charm," she said. "If you ever have need of any service in the sea, throw this scale in the water, and call my brother, the salmon, to help you."

Then, raising her eyes to the sky, Vila saw a falcon who pursued a dove. She whistled, and the two birds came and perched on her shoulders. From the falcon's crest she took a feather, and one from the wing of the dove, and gave them to Stoian.

"Take these two charms," she said. "If ever you have need of any service in the air, cast these plumes on the air, and call my brother the falcon, and my sister the dove, to help you. And now, farewell, my brother. I have exhausted for you the secrets of my art. You will not see me more."

Stoian thanked his sister Vila, and did all as she had said. The vessels stopped between two mountains. The young girls came to the fountains, they heard the songs of Stoian, they went on board and accepted the prettiest presents without too much persuasion, and in the evening they told all the village. "There was never seen more beautiful ships, richer treasures, or more amiable merchants."

The next day the Princess of India, with a dozen companions, came to the bank in a magnificent palanquin borne by the gentlest and most beautiful elephants. She had a little green parrakeet on her shoulder, who delighted her with its chatter. Stoian came to meet the lady and do the honours of his ship. At each booth they displayed the richest stuffs—the most rare and sparkling jewellery, rings, bracelets, necklaces, diadems. The princess and her companions were fascinated. The day passed before they could tear themselves away from all the marvels that astonished and charmed their eyes.

As soon as night fell on the sea, Stoian raised the anchor and spread the sails. At the first movement of the vessel the princess was frightened. She sprang on the deck and took the parrakeet on her finger.

"Dear bird," she said, "fly and tell my father they are carrying off his child."



A white dove took the flask in her beak (P. 45)

The parrakeet flew off, but Stoian immediately threw on the air the feather of the falcon, crying, "My brother the falcon, come help me!"

All at once a black speck appeared in the sky. This was a falcon, who cleft the air, seized the parrakeet and carried it to a rock to devour.

The princess gave Stoian a disdainful look, and threw her ring in the sea. All at once the ship stopped as if it had touched ground. In vain the wind swept through the sails, a concealed force held the vessel fast.

Stoian threw into the water the scale of the salmon and cried:

"My brother the salmon, come and help me."

He had not finished speaking, when they saw the surface of the water sparkle with the rich scales of an enormous salmon. Then the fish dived down and took the ring, and the vessel sped on with full sails and the most favourable winds.

Then the princess uttered a cry and ran to rejoin her companions. But the next day at dawn she came on deck and said to Stoian:

"With one word I can change this flect to stone, and you will never see your home again. But if you will get me some of the water of immortality, I am ready to follow you! Do you see that rock below there, from whence comes a thick smoke? There is a fountain, guarded by two dragons with nostrils that send out fire. No one has evaded the vigilance of these monsters, who do not sleep day or night. If you succeed where all the world has failed, and fill this little bottle, you will have no friend or servant more devoted than I."

For all answer Stoian seized the flask, and casting the dove's feather on the wind, said:

"My sister the dove, come help me."

Immediately a dove, white as snow, came and perched on Stoian's shoulder. She took the flask in her beak, flew high in the air, and disappeared. At the end of an hour she returned and drew it off her wing. Stoian could offer to the princess the water of immortality.

"Thanks," said the young woman, in the most tender voice. "Now you have nothing to fear from me. Speak. Where are you taking me?"

"To the pashaw, my master," answered Stoian.

"Ah!" said she, and dropping her veil over her face, she went away. During the rest of the voyage she did not speak to Stoian.

When the return of the young hunter was known, it was a great feast day at Kronjevatz. From the town and the country all came to see the entrance of the Princess of India. It was a marvellous sight. First came the dozen companions, each mounted on a black horse. One of Stoian's companions led each horse by the bridle. No one had ever seen anything more magnificent than these young men with their rich suits, their shining swordbelts, their swords in scabbards of silver, their carabines inlaid with gold. But all was forgotten when they saw Stoian and his captive. Although she was enveloped in a long veil, so that only two great black eyes could be seen, the princess eclipsed her companions as the moon surpasses the stars. Her white horse seemed happy to carry her. All the men admired her on the way, but the women looked at Stoian. Handsome, haughty and sad, he attracted all eyes.

Entering the palace, where the pashaw awaited them, the stranger raised her veil. At the view of her marvellous beauty, Reschid would have embraced her, but she repulsed him forcibly.

"You are ill-bred," said the princess, proudly. "You do not ask my name, nor that of my father. You know neither who I am, nor what I wish. Am I a dog, or a falcon, that one should seize me by force? You must know that to possess me one must have a two-fold youth, that of the body and of the soul."

"I have a very young soul," said the pashaw. "As to the body, I only ask the best means to rejuvenate that, if but to marry you and live a long time near you. But the means!"

"I have found the means," said the princess. "See

here! This flask contains the water of immortality. You must have your head cut off. Once dead, I will sprinkle you with this magic water and I will make you young and handsome as at twenty years."

The pashaw made a grimace. Then looking around him he saw Stoian, and knit his brows.

"I believe," he said, "in this marvellous water; but I would not mind seeing it tried. Suppose I try it on this handsome young fellow, the sight of whom displeases me, I know not why. Come here, young man, to rejuvenate you they are going to cut off your head."

"I am too young to prove the thing," said Stoian, looking at the lovely princess, "but I do not recoil from danger. Of what use is life?"

At a sign from the pashaw the janizary drew his sword and cut off the head of the young man at a single stroke. Everyone uttered a cry of terror, but the princess sprinkled the marvellous water on the body, which still palpitated. Stoian raised himself full of life and health, and so young and handsome that the old pashaw, mad with jealousy, cried out:

"Make me young, princess, and quick! Don't lose a moment."

He called a janizary and gave the order. Then perceiving Yacob, who made believe he was weeping, he said:

"My poor Yacob, my faithful friend, my right arm, I cannot leave you old when I am going to become young. Are we not bound together? No, my friend, I am not selfish; I have need of you. It is necessary that we should grow young together. They shall cut off your head at the same time."

At this mark of friendship Yacob grew pale as death. He tried to speak, he opened his mouth, but the signal was given, and at the same moment his head rolled by the side of the pashaw's.

"Take away these corpses," said the princess, coldly, "and throw to the dogs the body of the wretch who dared to treat me without respect."

At these words everyone looked at each other. The

Turks frowned, but the Servians drew their swords and said, "The princess is right. The punishment has fallen where it was deserved. Evil to him who does not respect a woman."

And an old Turk responded: "What is done is done, no one escapes his destiny."

Peace once more established, the princess said to Stoian:

"You see me now a widow before being married. Will you now take me back to my father?"

"Not yet," said Stoian, "it is one of the first rights of a Servian to run away with his wife, and I have a dozen friends here who are ready to do the same."

"Stoian," said the princess, smiling. "You know I don't like violence. What need is there to run away with me? It is only necessary to conduct me to your mother, and to give me a place at your fireside."

So said, so done, and on the same day there were thirteen weddings in Kronjevatz.

Reschid had more than one successor, and there was more than one Yacob, for where there is a pashaw like Reschid, there will also be flatterers and traitors. But experience is of use to evil doers, and fear checks them. No one disturbed Stoian, and all respected the Princess of India.

The house this couple inhabited may yet be seen, and a stone over the gate is shown to the stranger, which is said to have been carved by Stoian himself. Upon it is a carabine crossed by a sword. Below is the word which was the joy of Stoian and the terror of the Turks—"Liberty."

ZERBINO, THE BEAR

(A NEAPOLITAN TALE)

CHAPTER I



The laughing ladies

ONCE upon a time there dwelt at Salerno a young wood-cutter named Zerbino. Poor, and an orphan, he had no friends, and being of an unsociable and taciturn disposition, he never willingly opened his lips to anyone, nor did anyone ever talk to him. Because he did not trouble his head about other people's business they

thought him a fool. He was nicknamed the Bear, and never was a name better earned. In the morning, when the townsfolk were asleep, he would trudge off to the mountain-side shouldering his woodman's axe and stay the livelong day by himself in the forest; then, when the sun went down, he would return home, dragging after him some sorry faggots with which to pay for his supper. When he passed by the fountain where the village maidens met every evening to fill their pitchers and waste their breath chattering, they all mocked at his gloomy face. Neither Zerbino's black beard nor his bright eyes disconcerted the boldfaced group. The chief amusement of these maidens was to try and provoke the poor fellow by their sneers.

"Zerbino, angelic Zerbino, only say the word and my heart is yours."

"Light of my eyes," went on another, "let me hear the music of your voice, and I am yours."

"Zerbino, Zerbino," and all these silly maidens took up the cry and shouted in chorus, "which of us have you chosen for a wife? Is it I? Is it I? Is it I? Which of us will you have?"

"The greatest chatterbox," replied the woodcutter, shaking his fist at them; and each immediately retorted, "Thanks, my good Zerbino, thanks."

The shy woodcutter, amid shouts of laughter, used to escape from his tormentors like a wild boar flying from the hunters, and, shutting-to his door, he would sup on a piece of bread and a glass of water, and then, wrapping himself in an old blanket, lay himself to rest upon the floor. Without any cares, regrets, or desires, he soon fell into a dreamless sleep.

If true happiness consists in not having "feelings," Zerbino was the happiest of men.

CHAPTER II

ONE day, tired out with hacking at an old box-tree which was as hard as a rock, Zerbino was about to take his *siesta* beside a pool shaded by fine trees, when, to his great surprise, he perceived resting on the sward a maiden of marvellous beauty, robed in swansdown. The fair unknown was to all appearances the victim of a distressing dream. Her face wore a painful expression and her hands moved restlessly; it seemed as though she were trying in vain to resist the sleep which overpowered her.

"As if there is any sense," exclaimed Zerbino, "in sleeping at midday with the sun shining full upon one's face! Women are so foolish!"

He bent and interlaced some branches so as to shade the stranger's head, and over the natural arbour so formed he threw his working jacket. He was just interlacing the last piece of foliage when he descried a snake in the grass,

a couple of paces from the unknown maiden; it was moving toward her and shooting out its venomous tongue the while.

"Ali!" cried Zerbino, "so small and yet so wicked!"



Zerbino descried a snake in the grass (P. 50)

And with two blows of his axe he cut the snake into three pieces, each of which quivered visibly, as if it still desired to reach the fair stranger. The woodcutter then with a movement of his foot caused them to fall into the pool.

As they fell in they made a hissing noise, more like a red hot iron plunged into water than anything else.

At this noise the fairy awoke, and raising herself up, her eyes sparkling with joy, she exclaimed, "Zerbino! Zerbino!"

"That is my name, I know," replied the woodcutter, "but there is no sort of need to call it out so loud."

"What, my friend," said the fairy, "do you not wish me to thank you for the service you have rendered me? You have more than saved my life."

"I have not saved you from anything at all," said Zerbino, with his usual bad grace. "Another time do not go to sleep upon the grass without first seeing whether there are any snakes about, that is my advice. Now, good day. Let me go to sleep; I have no time to waste." Whereupon he stretched himself at full length upon the sward and closed his eyes.

"Zerbino," said the fairy, "you have asked me no favour."

"I only ask you to leave me in peace. When a man does not want anything but what he has, he has all that he wants. When a man has what he wants, he is content. Good day." And the surly fellow began to snore.

"Poor boy!" said the fairy. "Your soul sleeps as yet; but whatever you may say or do, I shall always be grateful to you. If it had not been for you, I should have been changed into the form of an adder for a hundred years, so I owe you a hundred years of youth and beauty. How shall I repay you? I know," she added. "When a man has all that he wants he is happy; you said so yourself. Well! my good Zerbino, you shall have everything you like and everything you want. Soon I hope you will have reason to bless the fairy of the spring."

She then described three circles in the air with her hazel wand, and stepped so lightly into the pool that not even a ripple disturbed its peaceful surface. On the approach of their queen the rushes bent their heads and the waterlilies bloomed, opening their choicest buds. The trees, the sunshine, and even the breeze, everything smiled upon

the fairy and seemed to vie with each other to give her pleasure. She waved her wand for the last time, and the waters, on a sudden blazing to their depths, divided to receive their youthful sovereign. It seemed as though a ray of sunlight had pierced the dark abyss. Then everything relapsed into shadow and silence, and naught was heard save the snores of Zerbino.

CHAPTER III

THE sun was already westering when the woodcutter awoke. He returned to his work quietly enough, and aimed a vigorous blow at the trunk of the tree the branches of which he had lopped off in the morning. His axe rung on the wood without making the slightest impression upon it. Great drops of sweat stood on Zerbino's forehead as he struck in vain at the wretched tree that persistently defied all his strength.

"Ah!" exclaimed he, as he looked at his axe all notched and blunted, "what a pity it is that no tool has ever been invented which would cut through wood just as though it were a pat of fresh butter! I wish I had just such a tool, I know."

He stepped back a couple of paces, swung the axe over his head, and struck it with such force against the tree that he almost fell with his nose on the ground and his arms well stretched out in front of him.

"Per Baccho!" he explained, "I must be getting blind; I have struck too much to one side."

Zerbino was instantly reassured upon this point, for at that moment the tree fell, and so close to him that the poor fellow barely escaped being crushed by it.

"That was a fine stroke!" he cried; "it will get me on ahead with my work to-day. How cleanly the trunk is cut through! it looks as though it had been sawn in two. There isn't another woodcutter living who can do this work like my mother's son!"

Thereupon he gathered together all the branches he had lopped off that morning; then, untying a rope which

was wound round his waist, he sat astride on the faggot so as to be able to bind it more firmly together, and secured the whole with a slip-knot.

"Now," said he, "I must drag this all the way to the town. It is a thousand pities that faggots have not four legs like horses! I should canter gaily along into Salerno like a fine cavalier riding for his pleasure. I should like just for once in a way to show off like that."

At these words the faggot raised itself up and set off at a long swinging trot. Without evincing the least surprise the worthy Zerbino allowed himself to be carried off by this novel kind of steed, and as he rode along he pitied the poor folk by the way who were obliged to trudge along on foot all for want of a faggot.

CHAPTER IV

AT the time of which we are speaking there was a great square in the middle of Salerno, and in this square stood the king's palace. The king then reigning was, as everyone knows, the famous Mouchamiel, whose name has been immortalized in history. Every afternoon the king's daughter, Princess Aleli, was to be seen sitting in a melancholy attitude in the balcony. In vain her attendants tried to amuse her by their songs, their tales and their flattering tongues. Aleli paid no heed to them. For three years the king her father had wished to marry her to each of the great barons in the vicinity one after the other, and for three years the princess had refused every suitor who had presented himself. Salerno was to be her dowry, and she felt this was the bait that drew them, and that she was not loved for her own sake.

Of an earnest and serious disposition, Aleli was lacking both in ambition and vanity. She did not laugh with the idea of showing off her pearly teeth to proper advantage; she was a good listener, and never spoke unless she had something to say. This disease, a rare one among ladies of fashion, was the despair of the court physicians.

On the day of which we have been speaking, Aleli



Zerbino galloped into the square, riding his faggot.

was even more dreamy than usual, when suddenly Zerbino galloped into the square, riding his faggot with all the dignity of an emperor. At this novel sight the two ladies in waiting on the princess laughed immoderately, and as they had some oranges at hand, they pelted the strange cavalier with the fruit.

"Laugh on, my fine ladies," he cried, pointing at them with his finger, "and may you laugh till your teeth are worn down to the gums. That is Zerbino's wish for you."

And then and there the two ladies in waiting went out of the royal presence laughing fit to split their sides, and nothing could stop them. The threats of the woodcutter, and the commands of the princess, who was sorry for the poor man, were alike unavailing.

"A kind-hearted little woman," said Zerbino, looking at Aleli, "with a gentle and melancholy mien! As for you, I wish you every happiness. May you love the first man who makes you laugh, and marry him into the bargain!"

Whereupon he pulled his front lock and took leave of the princess in the most graceful manner possible.

As a general rule, when a person is riding a faggot it is better for him not to attempt to salute anybody, not even a queen; but this Zerbino forgot, so evil befell him. To make his bow to the princess he let go the rope which held the branches together in a bundle, whereupon the faggot fell apart, and our friend Zerbino fell backward with his legs in the air in the most ridiculous manner possible. He turned a wonderful somersault by a vigorous effort, carrying with him a quantity of foliage, and crowned like a sylvan god he rolled over another ten paces.

How is it that when anyone falls down at the risk of breaking his neck everybody laughs? I am sure I cannot tell. It is a mystery that as yet philosophers have not been able to solve. All I know is that everyone laughed at that moment, the Princess Aleli as much as anyone. But all at once she rose from her seat, and gazing earnestly at Zerbino she placed her hand to her heart and to her brow, and entered the palace, agitated by some emotion unknown to her hitherto. In the meantime, Zerbino gathered the

scattered branches together, and went home on foot like any ordinary woodcutter. Prosperity had not dazzled him, and his late mishap did not disconcert him in the least. He had got through a good day's work, and that was enough for him. He purchased an excellent buffalo cheese, as hard and as white as marble, cut himself a great slice out of it, and supped with a capital appetite. The simple fellow had no idea what mischief he had done, nor what commotion he had left behind him.

CHAPTER V

WHILE these important events were taking place, the great clock in the tower of Salerno struck four.

It was a blazing hot day, and silence reigned in the streets. In the retirement of his chamber, away from the heat and noise, King Mouchamiel was meditating on the welfare of his people—in other words, he slept.

All at once he awoke with a start: a pair of arms were round his neck, and scalding tears were falling on his face. It was the lovely Aleli, who was fondly embracing her father in a paroxysm of affection.

"What is all this about?" said the king, surprised at this vast increase of affection. "You kiss me, and you weep. Ah, true daughter of your mother, you wish me to do something for you! Say, is it not so?"

"On the contrary, my dear father," said Aleli. "Your obedient daughter is willing to do as you wish. The son-in-law you have desired so long I have found at last, and to please you I am ready to give him my hand."

"Very good," replied Mouchamiel; "we have done with whims at last, have we? Whom are you going to marry? The Prince of Cava? No? Then it must be the Count of Capri? The Marquis of Sorrento? No? Then who is it?"

"I do not know, dear father."

"How is this? You do not know? You must have seen him?"

"Yes, just now in the public square," answered Aleli.

"And he addressed you?"

"No, father. Is there any need of speech when two hearts understand one another?"

Mouchamiel made a very wry face, scratched his ear, and staring his daughter full in the face—

"At any rate," said he, "it is a prince?"

"I do not know, father. What *does* it matter?"

"It matters very considerably, my daughter. You do not understand politics. That you should of your own free will choose a son-in-law that I like is wonderful. As a king and a father I shall never cross your wishes if they agree with mine. Otherwise I have duties to perform toward my family and my subjects, and I require that my orders shall be obeyed. Where dwells this fine bird of whose name you plead ignorance, and with whom you have exchanged no words, and yet who adores you?"

"I know not," replied Aleli.

"This is too much!" exclaimed Mouchamiel. "And is it to tell me this tomfoolery that you come and take up the time that belongs to my people? Here, my lords, let the princess's ladies be called to lead her back to her own apartments."

On hearing these words, Aleli raised her hands to heaven and melted into tears. Then she fell at the king's feet, sobbing. At the same moment the two ladies of her suite entered the apartment, convulsed with laughter.

"Silence, women, silence!" cried Mouchamiel, indignant at the breach of etiquette. "Guards," said the king, beside himself, "let these insolent attendants be arrested, and their heads struck off. I will teach them that there is nothing on earth less laughable than a king."

"Sire," said Aleli, clasping her hand together, "remember you have made your reign illustrious by abolishing capital punishment."

"You are right, my daughter. We are a civilized nation. These ladies shall be spared; we shall be content to treat them in Russian fashion. Let them be beaten till they die a natural death."

"Have mercy, father!" said Aleli. "It is I, your daughter, who craves you to have mercy."

"For heaven's sake, then, stop them laughing, and rid me of them," said the worthy Mouchamiel. "Take them away, and let them be shut up in some cell until they die of silence and *ennui*."

"Oh, father!" sobbed Aleli.

"Come," said the king, "let them be married then, and let us have done with it."

"I have mercy, sire, we will laugh no more," cried the two ladies, falling on their knees, and opening their mouths, where there was nothing now to be seen but toothless gums. "Oh that your majesty would pardon us and avenge us! We are the victims of an infernal art; a wicked monster has bewitched us."

"A sorcerer in my kingdom!" said the king, who was a sceptic in such matters; "it is impossible. Such a thing cannot be, because I do not believe in sorcerers."

"Sire," said one of the ladies, "is it in accordance with the laws of nature that a faggot should trot like a horse and amble under the guidance of a woodcutter? That is what we have just witnessed in the square before the palace."

"A faggot!" exclaimed the king. "This savours much of sorcery. Guards, seize the man and his faggot, and, the one bearing the other, let them both be burned. After that I hope to be allowed to slumber in peace."

"My beloved is to be burned!" cried the princess, waving her hands about like one distracted. "Sire, this noble cavalier is my future husband—my love, my life! If a hair of his head is touched I shall die!"

"An infernal power seems to be loose in my house," said poor Mouchamiel. "What is the good of being king if one is not allowed to slumber without being disturbed? But I am only tormenting myself needlessly. Let Mistigray be summoned. Since I have a prime minister, it is the least I can expect of him that he should tell me what I think and what I wish done."

CHAPTER VI

LORD MISTIGRAY was announced. He was a stout man, of low stature, as broad as he was high, and he rolled into the room rather than walked; he possessed cunning eyes that looked all ways at once, a low forehead, a hooked nose, large cheeks, and a treble chin—such was the portrait of the celebrated minister, who, in the name of King Mouchamiel, really governed Salerno. He entered the apartment smiling and puffing with an affected air, like a man who carries the weight of power and all its cares with a light heart.

“Here you are at last!” said the king. “How comes it that unheard-of things occur in my kingdom, and that I am the last to hear of them?”

“Everything is going on as usual,” answered Mistigray, composedly. “I have here in my hand the police reports, and happiness and peace reign as usual in the state;” and spreading out some important-looking papers, he read as follows:—“Port of Salerno. All is quiet. No extra goods have been smuggled through the Custom House. Three quarrels between sailors, six stabs with knives, five admissions into hospital. Nothing fresh.”

“And that is all you know!” asked Mouchamiel in an angry voice. “Very good! As to myself, my lord, though the affairs of the state are not my business, I know more of them than you do. A man astride a faggot has crossed the square before the palace, has bewitched my daughter, and she wants to marry him.”

“Sire,” replied Mistigray, “I was not unacquainted with this detail; a minister of state knows everything; but why trouble your majesty with these follies? The man will be hanged, and there will be an end of it.”

“And can you tell me where the scoundrel lives?”

“Certainly, your majesty,” replied Mistigray. “A prime minister sees and hears everything and goes everywhere.”

“Very good!” said the king; “if in a quarter of an hour the fellow is not here, you will cease to be my prime minister, and will have to vacate that office in favour of

someone who will not rest content with seeing, but will act. Go!"

Mistigray withdrew still smiling, but no sooner had he reached the ante-room than he grew purple in the face as though he were being suffocated, and was obliged to take the arm of the first friend he met. This happened to be the mayor of the town, whom a lucky chance had brought to his elbow. Mistigray stepped on one side with him, and taking the magistrate by his button-hole—

"Sir," he said, slowly and emphatically, "if in ten minutes' time you do not bring me the man who rode through Salerno astride a faggot I shall dismiss you from your office; do you understand? I shall dismiss you."

Perfectly stunned by this threat the mayor hastened to the head of the police.

"Where is the man who rides a faggot?" he said.

"What man?" inquired the superintendent of police.

"Do not argue with your superior, I will not put up with it. In not arresting the scoundrel you have failed in your duty. If in five minutes the man is not forthcoming I shall dismiss you. Go!"

The head of the police ran to the guard-house attached to the palace; there he found men throwing dice whose duty it was to watch over the public peace.

"Knives!" he exclaimed, "if in three minutes you do not bring me the man who rides a faggot, I will have you flogged like galley-slaves. Make haste, and do not let me hear a word in reply."

The men went out using strong language; in the meantime the clever and wily Mistigray, with full faith in the miracles of organization, quietly re-entered the king's apartment, wearing once more on his lips the perpetual smile which was a part of his business.

CHAPTER VII

TWO words spoken by the minister in the king's ear delighted Mouchamiel. The idea of burning a sorcerer was not displeasing to him. It was an agreeable little

event which would reflect credit on his reign and be a proof of his wisdom with which to astonish posterity. Only one thing troubled the king, and that was poor Aleli drowned in tears, whom her attendants tried in vain to lead back to her own apartments.

Mistigray looked at the king and winked, and then approaching the princess, said to her in his softest voice:

"Madam, he is coming; you must not let him see you cry. On the contrary, adorn yourself, and be even more beautiful than usual, so that the sight of you alone will suffice to assure him of his good fortune."

"I understand you, good Mistigray," cried Aleli. "Thanks, thanks, my father," added she, covering the hands of the king with kisses. "Bless you, bless you a thousand times!"

She went out beside herself with joy, her head raised, her eyes sparkling, and so elated with her happiness that she stopped the first lord-in-waiting she met in the corridor to tell him of her approaching marriage.

"Good chamberlain," she added, "he is coming. Do the honours of the palace to him yourself, and be assured you will not find us ungrateful."

Left alone with Mistigray, the king glared angrily at his minister.

"Are you mad?" he asked. "What, without consulting us, you pledge our royal word! Do you think you are master in our kingdom to dispose of our daughter and ourself without our consent?"

"Bah!" calmly said Mistigray; "it was necessary to soothe the princess, that was the first thing to be done. In politics one never troubles one's self about the future. Every day brings its own duty."

"And our word," replied the king, "how can we withdraw it without perjuring ourself? Nevertheless, we will revenge ourself on the villain who has stolen our daughter's heart."

"Sire," said Mistigray, "a prince never breaks his word, but there are many ways of keeping it."

"What do you mean by that?" said Mouchamiel.

"Your majesty," replied the minister, "has just promised your daughter she shall marry. She shall be married, and after that the law must take its course, which says—'If a noble who is beneath the rank of baron dares to sue for the love of a princess of the blood royal, he will be treated as a noble, that is to say, he will be beheaded. If the suitor be a commoner, he will be treated as a commoner, that is to say, hanged. If he is a peasant he will be drowned like a dog.' You see, sire, that nothing is more easy than to harmonize your fatherly affection with your royal justice. We have so many laws in Salerno, that there is always a means of making them accommodate each other."

"Mistigray," said the king, "you are a rascal."

"Sire," said the fat courtier, bridling, "you flatter me. I am but a politician. I have been taught that there is one sort of morality for princes and another for smaller fry, and I have profited by the lesson. This discrimination is the genius of statesmen, the admiration of clever people, and the scandal of foolish ones."

"My good friend," replied the king, "you weary me with your three-barrelled phrases. I do not ask you for words, but for deeds. Hasten the execution of this man, and let us have done with it."

As he was thus speaking the Princess Aleli entered the royal apartment. She looked so lovely, her eyes beaming with happiness, that good Mouchamiel sighed and began to wish that the cavalier of the faggot had been a prince, so that he need not be hanged.

CHAPTER VIII

GLORY is a very fine thing, but it has its disadvantages. Farewell to the pleasure of being unknown, and of setting at defiance the curiosity of the mob. The triumphal entry of Zerbino was not effected without every child in Salerno learning the appearance, and way of life and abode, of the woodcutter. So the police had no great difficulty in finding the man they were in search of.

Zerbino was on his knees in his yard very busy, sharpening his famous hatchet; he was trying the edge on the nail of his thumb, when a hand swooped down upon him, seized hold of him by the collar, and with a vigorous pull dragged him up on his feet. A few punches and some blows with the butt-end of a musket assisted him into the street, and it was in this fashion that he learned that a minister of state took an interest in him, and that the king himself had sent for him to the palace.

Zerbino was a philosopher, and philosophers are never astonished at anything. He thrust both his hands into his belt, and walked calmly along, little heeding the blows that were showered on him. Still, to be a philosopher is not synonymous with being a saint, and a kick on his shin at last wore out the woodcutter's patience.

"Gently," he said, "have a little pity on a poor man."

"I believe the fellow wants to argue with us," said one of the men who were ill-treating him. "Our friend is delicate, and we must wear gloves as we lead him by the hand."

"I should like to see you in my place," cried Zerbino, "and we should see then if you would laugh."

"Silence, rascal!" cried the head of the police, aiming at him a blow strong enough to fell an ox.

The blow was no doubt badly aimed, for instead of hitting Zerbino, it went straight into the eye of a policeman. Maddened and half blind, the injured man threw himself upon his awkward chief and seized him by the hair. A fight ensued; in vain the bystanders strove to separate the combatants; blows fell right and left, and there was a general uproar. Children screamed, women cried, and the dogs barked. It was necessary to send for a guard to re-establish order by arresting the combatants and the bystanders.

Zerbino, as imperturbable as ever, was continuing his road to the palace, when he was saluted in the great square by a long file of gentlemen in embroidered coats and knee breeches. They were the royal lackeys, who, under the leadership of the major-domo and the great chamberlain

himself, had come to meet the lover whom the princess was expecting. As they had received orders to be polite, each of them had his hat in his hand and a smile on his lips. They bowed to Zerbino; and the woodcutter, like a well-brought up man as he was, returned their salute. Fresh bows on the part of the lackeys, a fresh bow on the part of Zerbino. Eight or ten times this ceremony was repeated with the most profound gravity. Zerbino was the first to get tired; not having been born in a palace his back was wanting in the practice necessary, and was not very supple.

"Enough, enough!" he cried; "and as the song says—

'After three noes
The chance;
After three bows
The dance,'

you have bowed only too often, now dance."

And on the spot the lackeys fell to dancing while they bowed, and bowing as they danced; and in this way, preceding Zerbino in perfect order, they gave him an entry into the palace worthy of a king.

CHAPTER IX

TO make himself look as dignified and imposing as possible, Mouchamiel was gravely regarding the end of his nose; Aleli was sighing, Mistigray mending pens like a diplomatist in search of ideas, and the courtiers, silent and motionless, looked as though lost in thought. At last the great door of the apartment was thrown open, and the major-domo and lackeys entered in step, dancing a saraband, much to the astonishment of the court. Behind them walked the woodcutter, as little impressed by royal splendour as if he had been born in a palace. Nevertheless, at the sight of the king he stopped, took off his hat, which he held with both hands to his breast, bowed low three times, scraping his right leg behind him; then he put on his hat again, quietly seated himself in an arm-chair, and crossed his legs.

"Father," cried the princess, throwing herself on the king's neck, "here is the husband you have given me. How

handsome he is! What a noble air he has! Will you not love him for my sake?"

"Mistigray," murmured Mouchamiel, half strangled,



Zerbino quietly seated himself in an arm-chair (P. 64)

"interrogate that man most cautiously. Think of my daughter's peace of mind and my own. What a misfortune! Oh, how happy fathers would be if they had no children!"

"Do not be uneasy, your majesty," replied Mistigray; "humanity is at the same time my duty and my pleasure."

"Stand up, you rascal!" he said, turning to Zerbino, in a rough voice; "answer me at once if you wish to save your neck. Are you a prince in disguise? You are silent, fellow! You are a sorcerer!"

"No more a sorcerer than you are yourself," replied Zerbino, without leaving his arm-chair.

"Ah! rogue," cried the minister, "this denial proves your crime. Your silence condemns you, double-dyed villain."

"If I confessed to the crime, should I be innocent?" asked Zerbino.

"Sire," said Mistigray, who mistook passion for eloquence, "be just; rid your kingdom, rid the earth, of this monster. Death is too good for such a wretch!"

"Go on," said Zerbino; "bark away, old man; bark away, but do not bite."

"Sire," cried Mistigray, puffing, your justice and humanity are in opposition. Bow wow, bow wow! Humanity requires you to protect your subjects by ridding them of this sorcerer. Bow wow, bow wow! Justice demands that he should be hanged or burned. Bow, wow, bow wow! You are a father, bow wow! but you are a king also, bow wow! and the king should supersede the father, bow wow, bow wow!"

"Mistigray," replied the king, "you speak well, but you have contracted a trick perfectly unbearable. Not so much affectation if you please. Finish what you have to say."

"Sire," answered the minister; "death, hanging, burning! Bow wow! bow wow!"

While the king sighed, Aleli, abruptly quitting her father, placed herself at Zerbino's side.

"Issue your commands, sire," she said, "this is my husband, and know that I will share his fate, whatever it may be."

At this avowal all the court ladies covered their faces. Mistigray himself felt called upon to blush.

"Unhappy girl" exclaimed the furious king, "in

disgracing yourself thus you have pronounced your own sentence. Guards, arrest these two; let them be married forthwith, and after that, seize the first boat that is to be found in the harbour, and throw the guilty wretches into it, and let them be abandoned to the fury of the waves."

"Ah, sire!" exclaimed Mistigray, as the princess and Zerbino were led off, "you are the greatest king in the world. Your goodness, and gentleness, and indulgence will serve as an example to posterity. What will not the *Court Journal* say to-morrow? As for us, astounded by such magnanimity, we have nothing to do but admire it in silence."

"My poor daughter!" cried the king: "what will she do without her father? Guards, seize Mistigray, and put him also in the boat. It will be a consolation for me to know that that clever man is with my beloved Aleli. And then a change of ministry is pleasant diversion, and in my sad situation I have need of one. Farewell, my worthy Mistigray!"

Mistigray stood transfixed and speechless; he was getting back his breath to curse princes and their ingratitude when he was marched out of the palace. In spite of all his cries and threats, entreaties and tears, he was thrown into the bark, and soon our three friends found themselves alone on the wide sea.

As to good King Mouchamiel, he wiped away a tear, and shut himself into his own apartment, there to finish his siesta which had been so disagreeably interrupted.

CHAPTER X

IT was a lovely still night; the moon's pure rays illumined the rippling waves, the wind was off the land, and quickly carried the bark far out to sea. Soon Capri appeared, like a basket of flowers set in the midst of the billows. Zerbino had hold of the rudder, and was humming some plaintive song, while Aleli, silent, but not sad, was listening at his side.

The past she had forgotten, and of the future she never thought; to be near Zerbino was all in all to her.

Mistigray, not being in love, was less philosophical; angry and perturbed, he moved about like a bear in a cage, and addressed long discourses to Zerbino, to which the woodman never listened. Imperturbable as ever, Zerbino dropped his head; not being accustomed to official harangues, those of the minister sent him off to sleep.

"What is to become of us?" cried Mistigray. "Come, dreadful sorcerer, if you have any power, show it and deliver us from this. Make yourself a prince or king somewhere, and make me your prime minister. I must have something to govern. What is the good of your power, if you are not able to make your friends' fortunes?"

"I am hungry," said Zerbino, opening half an eye.

Aleli rose at once, and looked round her.

"My dear," said she, "what would you like to eat?"

"I want some figs and grapes," returned the woodcutter.

Mistigray gave a loud scream, for a barrel of figs and raisins suddenly came up between his legs, and threw him down.

"Ah," thought he, as he got up again, "I know your secret, wretched sorcerer. If you get all you want, my fortune is made. I have not been a minister of state for nothing, my fine prince; I will make you wish what I wish."

While Zerbino ate his figs, Mistigray approached him, bowing with a smiling face.

"Lord Zerbino," said he, "I have come to beg for your excellency's invaluable friendship. Perhaps your highness has not understood the devotion that I hid under the pretended severity of my words; but I can assure you that it was all calculated to hasten your happiness. It was I who hurried on your happy marriage."

"I am hungry," said Zerbino; "give me some figs and raisins!"

"Here they are, my lord," said Mistigray, with all a courtier's grace. "I hope that your excellency will be satisfied with my little services, and that you will often give me the opportunity of showing my zeal. (Thrice-dolted idiot," he muttered under his breath, "you do not listen to

me. I must really make interest with Aleli. The great secret in politics is to please the ladies.) By the way, Lord Zerbino," he went on, smiling, "you forget that you were married this evening. Would it not be suitable to make a wedding present to your royal bride?"

"You weary me, old man," replied Zerbino. "A wedding



*A barrel of figs and raisins suddenly came up between
Mistigray's legs (P. 68)*

present! I should like to know where to fish it from! From the bottom of the sea? Go and ask the fishes for it, and bring it back to me."

The same moment, as if an invisible hand had pushed him, Mistigray jumped overboard, and disappeared beneath the waves.

Zerbino went on munching his raisins, while Aleli never tired of gazing at him.

"Look at that porpoise jumping out of the water," said Zerbino.

It was not a porpoise, but the unfortunate messenger, who, having risen to the surface again, was struggling in the midst of the waves. Zerbino seized hold of Mistigray by his hair, and drew him on board. Strange to relate, the fat courtier carried in his teeth a carbuncle, which shone like a star in the darkness.

As soon as he could get his breath, "Here," said he, "is the present that the fish king offers to the charming Aleli. You see, Lord Zerbino, that you have in me the most faithful and devoted of slaves. If you ever have occasion to want a minister in whom to confide——"

"I am hungry," said Zerbino; "give me some figs and raisins!"

"My lord," returned Mistigray, "will you do nothing for your wife, the princess? This bark, exposed as it is to wind and weather, is not an abode worthy of her birth and her beauty."

"Stop, Mistigray," said Aleli; "I am perfectly content. I desire nothing more."

"Do you not remember, madam," continued the officious minister, "that when the Prince of Capri offered you his hand, he sent to Salerno for a splendid ship made of acacia wood, the fittings of which were of gold and ivory; and how the sailors were dressed in velvet, and the ropes were all of silk, and how the three saloons were decorated with mirrors? That was what a small prince prepared for you. I am sure Lord Zerbino would not wish to be less generous; he is so noble, and powerful, and good."

"He is a stupid fellow," said Zerbino; "he is always talking. I should like to have a ship like that, if only to shut your mouth, chatterbox, and then you would be silenced."

At that moment Aleli gave a little scream of surprise and pleasure, which startled the woodcutter.

Where was he? On a magnificent vessel which glided

through the waves as gracefully as a swan with wings outspread. A tent on deck, lighted by lamps of alabaster, made a richly furnished saloon. Aleli, seated all the time at her husband's feet, never took her eyes off his face. Mistigray ran all over the ship, and wanted to give orders to every one of the sailors. But on this strange vessel no one appeared. Mistigray's eloquence was wasted; he could not even find a cabin-boy to govern.

Zerbino rose to see what way they were making. Mistigray hastened to him, smiling as usual.

"Your lordship," he said, "I trust, is satisfied with my efforts and my zeal."

"Silence, chatterbox!" said the woodcutter. "I forbid you to speak till to-morrow morning. I am dreaming; let me sleep."

Mistigray stood with his mouth wide open, making the most respectful gestures; then, in despair, he went to the dining saloon and ate his supper without saying a word. He drank for four hours without being able to console himself, and finished by slipping under the table. During this time Zerbino dreamed at his ease. Aleli was the only one who did not sleep.

CHAPTER XI

"**M**AN tires of everything, even of happiness," says a proverb; with still greater reason everyone is likely to tire of being at sea on board a ship where no word is uttered, and which is going no one knows where.

As soon as Mistigray came to himself and recovered his speech, he resolved to induce Zerbino to wish himself on shore. The thing was difficult. The wily courtier was always in dread lest by some indiscreet wish he might be sent back to the fishes; he feared above everything that Zerbino should regret his forest and his axe. To think of being the prime minister of a woodman!

Zerbino woke in a delightful temper; he was getting accustomed to the princess, and, rough as he was, her lovely face had a charm for him. Mistigray wished to seize the

opportunity; but, alas! women are so unreasonable where their affections are concerned! Aleli said to Zerbino how delightful it would be for them to live together by themselves, far removed from the noise and bustle of the world, in some retired cottage surrounded by an orchard on the banks of a stream. Without in the least understanding this romantic sentiment, our worthy Zerbino listened with pleasure to the gentle words that lulled him.

"A cottage with cows and poultry," said he, "that would be nice. If——"

Mistigray felt in another moment he would be lost, so he ventured on a bold stroke.

"Ah, my lord!" he cried, "look in front of you. How beautiful it is!"

"What is!" said the princess. "I see nothing."

"Nor I either," said Zerbino, rubbing his eyes.

"Is it possible?" replied Mistigray, as if much astonished. "What? Do you not see that marble palace which glitters in the sunshine, and that noble flight of steps, with orange-trees on each side, which descends by a hundred steps to the margin of the sea?"

"A palace," said Aleli, "to be surrounded with courtiers and selfish people and lackeys! I would rather not see it. Let us go away."

"Yes," said Zerbino, "a cottage would be much more to my taste, and we could be quieter there."

"This palace is unlike any other," cried Mistigray, with whom fear had the effect of quickening the imagination. "In this fairy abode there are neither courtiers nor lackeys; invisible hands wait upon one, and a person is at the same time alone and yet surrounded! The furniture has hands, the walls have ears."

"Have they tongues?" said Zerbino.

"Yes," replied Mistigray, "they can speak and say anything, but they can be silent when required."

"Well," said the woodcutter, "then they are more intelligent than you are. I should like to have a palace like that. Where is this fine palace? I do not see it."

"There it is before you, dear one," said the princess.



*Thirty dishes followed by the plates laid themselves on
the table (P. 76)*

The vessel had sped along toward the shore, and already the anchor was being cast in a harbour where the water was deep enough for them to be brought close up alongside of the quay. The harbour was half surrounded by great stairs in the shape of a horseshoe, and at the top of the stairs, on an immense platform overlooking the sea, stood the most delightful palace that was ever imagined.

The three friends went up gaily, Mistigray a little ahead, panting at every step. When he reached the castle gate he wished to ring, but there was no bell; he called, and the gate itself answered.

"What do you want, stranger?" it asked.

"To speak to the master of this mansion," returned Mistigray, rather puzzled at speaking for the first time to wrought iron.

"The master of this palace is Lord Zerbino," replied the gate. "When he approaches I will open."

Zerbino now came up with the beautiful Aleli on his arm, and the gate threw itself open with profound respect, and allowed the husband and wife to pass through, followed by Mistigray. When they reached the terrace, Aleli gazed at the magnificent scene before her; nothing but the sea—the great sea—glittering in the morning sunshine.

"How beautiful it is here!" she said; "and how delightful it would be to sit under this arcade among these oleanders in flower!"

"Yes," said Zerbino; "let us sit on the ground."

"Are there not arm-chairs here?" said Mistigray.

"Here we are! here we are!" cried the arm-chairs; and they all came running one after the other as fast as their four legs could carry them.

"It would be very pleasant to breakfast here," said Mistigray.

"Yes," said Zerbino; "but where is the table?"

"Here I am! here I am!" replied a deep contralto voice; and a beautiful mahogany table, walking with the staid grace of a matron, placed itself in front of the party.

"How charming!" cried the princess; "but where are the plates?"

"Here we are!" cried some little shrill voices; and thirty dishes, followed by their sisters the plates, and the knives and forks their cousins, not forgetting their aunts the salt-cellars, quickly laid themselves in the most perfect order on the table, which was covered with game, and fruit, and flowers.

"Lord Zerbino," said Mistigray, "you see what I am doing for you. All this is my work."

"That is not true!" cried a voice.

Mistigray turned round and saw nobody, for it was a column of the arcade which had spoken.

"My lord," said he, "I think no one can accuse me of falsehood; I always speak the truth."

"That is a lie!" said the voice.

"This palace is odious," thought Mistigray. "If the walls speak the truth, no court will ever be established here, and I shall never be prime minister. This must be altered. Lord Zerbino," he went on, "instead of

Mistigray started off like an arrow

(P. 77)

leading a solitary life here, would you not much rather have devoted subjects who would pay you some nice little taxes and furnish you with good soldiers, and who would surround you with affection and loyalty?"

"Be a king?" said Zerbino; "and why should I?"

"Do not listen to him, dear one," said the gentle Aleli. "Let us stay here; we are so happy, we two together."

"We three," said Mistigray. "I am the happiest of men in this place, and near you I wish for nothing else."

"That is false!" said the voice.



"What, my lord, is there anyone here who dares to doubt my devotion?"

"That is false!" returned the voice.

"My lord, do not listen to it," cried Mistigray. "I love and honour you; think of my services."

"You are lying!" replied the merciless voice.

"Oh, if you always lie, be off with you to the moon," said Zerbino; "that is the country for liars."

Fatal speech! for immediately Mistigray started off like an arrow through the air and disappeared above the clouds. Has he ever come down again to earth? I do not know, though some chroniclers affirm that he has reappeared, but under another name. It is certain though that he has never been seen in that palace where even the walls spoke the truth.

CHAPTER XII

LEFT to themselves, Zerbino crossed his arms and gazed at the sea, while Aleli fell into a gentle reverie. To live in an enchanted solitude with the person one loves is a dream of one's youth. To make acquaintance with her new domain, Aleli took Zerbino's arm. On the right hand and on the left the palace was surrounded with beautiful meadows watered by springs of water. Emerald oaks, copper beeches, larches with their needle points, and brilliant-leaved maples, threw their shadows across the lawns. In the midst of the foliage a thrush was singing, whose song breathed of peace and joy. Aleli put her hand to her heart, and looking at Zerbino, she said —

"Are you happy here, dearest? Have you nothing more to wish for?"

"I never have wished for anything," said Zerbino. "What should I want? To-morrow I shall take my axe and work hard. There are beautiful woods to cut down; I should think one could get more than a hundred faggots from them."

"Ah," said Aleli, sighing, "you do not love me."

"Love you!" replied Zerbino, "what is that? I am

sure I do not wish you any harm, on the contrary. Here is a place which has come to us out of the clouds; it is yours. Write to your father and ask him to come here; that will please me. If I have caused you any sorrow, it is not my fault. I could not help it. A woodcutter I am, and a woodcutter I hope to die. It is my calling, and I know how to keep my place. Pray do not cry, I do not want to say anything to hurt your feelings."

"Oh, Zerbino," cried poor Aleli, "what have I done for you to treat me like this? I must be very ugly and very bad for you not to wish to love me?"

"Love you! that is not my business. Once more, pray do not cry. It is no good. Calm yourself and be reasonable. More tears! Well, yes, if it pleases you, I do wish to love you. I love you, Aleli, I adore you."

Poor Aleli, weeping, raised her eyes. Zerbino was transformed; she saw he now possessed the tenderness of a husband and the devotion of a man who gives his heart and life forever. At this sight Aleli began crying afresh, but as she cried she smiled on Zerbino, who, in his turn, for the first time melted into tears. To weep without knowing why, is it not the greatest pleasure in life?

The nymph of the fountain now appeared on the scene leading the wise Mouchamiel by the hand. The good king had been very unhappy without his daughter and his prime minister. He affectionately embraced his children, gave them his blessing, and bade them farewell the same day to spare his emotion, his sensitiveness, and his health. The nymph remained the guardian of the united couple, who lived long and happily in their beautiful palace; "the world forgetting and by the world forgot."

THE LITTLE GRAY MAN

(AN ICELANDIC STORY)



The Little Gray Man

IN olden times (I speak of three or four hundred years ago) there dwelt at Skalholt, in Iceland, an old peasant who was neither clever nor rich. One day at church he heard a fine sermon preached on charity—"Give alms, my brethren—give alms," said the priest, "and the Lord will repay you a hundredfold." These words, repeated again and again, took hold of the peasant's mind, and confused what little brains he had. As soon as he got home he set to work to cut down the trees in his garden, to dig foundations, and to cart wood

and stones as if he were going to build a palace.

"What are you doing there, my poor husband?" asked his wife.

"Don't call me your poor husband," said the peasant in a solemn voice; "we are rich, my dear wife—or at least we soon shall be. In a fortnight's time I shall give away my cow."

"What! our only means of support!" exclaimed his wife. "Why, we shall die of starvation!"

"Be quiet, foolish woman!" replied the peasant; "it is very clear you do not understand the vicar's sermons. If we give away our cow, we shall receive a hundred in

its place for our reward. Our vicar said so. I shall stable fifty cows in the outhouse I am building, and with the price of the fifty others I will buy land enough to feed the herd both in winter and summer. We shall be richer than the king."

Without further troubling himself with his wife's remonstrances, our literal friend set to work to build his stable, much to the astonishment of his neighbours. When it was done, the good man fastened a cord round his cow's neck and took it straight to the vicar. He found him in conversation with two strangers whom he scarcely glanced at, so bent was he on making his present and receiving his reward. The pastor was greatly astonished, and pointed out to the poor man that our Lord was speaking of spiritual rewards, but all in vain; the peasant kept on repeating, "You said so, your Reverence—you said so." Tired of trying to make him listen to reason, the vicar, at last losing patience, turned him out of the house, and the man, quite bewildered, stood stock still in the middle of the road, repeating, "You said so, you said so."

He had to go home, which was not very easy, for it was spring-time and the ice was thawing and the wind blew up the snow in eddies. At every step he slipped, and the poor cow lowed and refused to advance. At the end of an hour the peasant had lost his way, and was in danger of losing his life into the bargain. Perplexed, he came to a full stop, bemoaning his bad luck and not knowing what to do with the cow he was leading. While he was thus musing disconsolately, a man came by carrying a large sack, and asked him what he was doing out there with his cow in such bad weather.

When the peasant had told him his trouble, "My good man," said the stranger, "you had better make an exchange with me. I live close by—give me your cow, which you will never be able to get home, and you take my sack; it is not very heavy, and all that it contains is worth having; there are meat and bones in it."

The bargain was soon concluded, and the stranger led off the cow, while the peasant laid the sack, which he found



Out came a little man dressed all in gray (P. 83)

exceedingly heavy, across his shoulders. Directly he got home, fearing the sneers and reproaches of his wife, he gave her a long story of all the dangers he had run, and how he had cleverly exchanged a cow that was dying for a sack full of treasures.

While his wife listened to this long story she looked furious, but her husband begged her not to be angry, but to put her biggest saucepan on the fire.

"You shall see what I have brought you," he repeated. "Wait a little and you will thank me."

Saying this, he opened the sack, and, lo and behold! out came a little man dressed all in gray like a mouse.

"Good evening, friends," he said, with an air worthy of a prince. "I hope that instead of cooking me you will give me something to eat. This little journey has given me a splendid appetite."

The peasant dropped into a chair as if he had been shot.

"There," said his wife, "did I not know it all along? Here's a nice piece of folly! but what can one expect of one's husband but stupidity? He has given away our cow, which was our only means of support; and now that we are without any, he brings home another mouth to feed. Why did you not remain under the snow, you and your sack and your treasure?"

The good woman would have gone on talking much longer if the little gray man had not pointed out to her that talking did not fill the pot, and that the wisest thing to do was to go out and bring home some game.

He went out immediately, in spite of the darkness and the storm of wind and snow, and returned after a while with a big sheep.

"Come," said he, "and kill this sheep for me. Do not let us die of hunger."

The old man and his wife looked at each other and then at the little man and his booty. This prize, fallen from the clouds, smelled of stolen property, but when starvation is in question, farewell to scruples! Lawfully or not the mutton was devoured with relish.

From that day forward there was always abundance in the peasant's hut. Sheep succeeded sheep, and the good man, more confirmed than ever in his belief, asked himself whether he had not gained by the exchange he had made, when Heaven, instead of the hundred cows, had sent him such a clever purveyor as the little gray man.

There is a reverse side to every shield. While mutton grew more and more plentiful in the old man's cottage, the royal flock which grazed in the meadows near grew smaller and smaller. The head shepherd, uneasy at this, told the king that for some time, though he had had them watched with redoubled vigilance, the finest sheep of the flock had disappeared one after the other. No doubt some clever thief must be in the neighbourhood. Soon it was known that there was a newcomer lodging in a peasant's hut, but that no one knew whence he came. The king then commanded the stranger to be brought before him. The little man walked off in custody quite unconcernedly, but the peasant and his wife trembled remorsefully when they thought that the receivers as well as the thief would probably be hanged.

When the little gray man was brought before the king and his court, the king asked him if by any chance he had heard that five big sheep had been stolen from the royal flock.

"Yes, your majesty," answered the little man, "it was I who took them."

"And by what right?" inquired the king.

"Your majesty," replied the little man, "I took them because a poor old couple were starving, while you, sire, were rolling in riches, and could not even consume the tenth part of your revenues. It seemed to me better that these good people should live on your superfluities rather than die of misery, while you do not know what to do with your riches."

The king was dumbfounded at his audacity, and after looking at the little man with an expression that boded no good, said—

"As far as I see, your chief talent is stealing."

The little man bowed with a proud modesty.

"Very well," said the king, "you deserve to be hanged, but I pardon you on condition that by to-morrow at this time you shall have stolen from my shepherds my black bull, which I have given particular orders to be carefully guarded."

"Your majesty," replied the little gray man, "requires of me an impossibility. How can I elude vigilance like that?"

"If you do not do it," returned the king, "you will be hanged."

And with a wave of his hand he dismissed the thief, to whom everybody whispered as he went out, "You will be hanged!"

The little gray man returned to the hut, where he was warmly welcomed by the old man and his wife. But he told them nothing, only that he wanted a rope, and should be starting at daybreak the next day. They gave him the cow's old halter, whereupon he retired to rest and slept peacefully.

At the first glimmer of dawn the little gray man set off with his rope. He went into the forest, taking the road along which the king's flocks would pass, and choosing a great oak well in sight, he hung himself by the neck to the thickest of its branches, taking good care not to make a slipknot.

Soon afterward two herdsmen arrived at the spot, leading the black bull.

"Ah," said one of them, "look at that rascal who has got his deserts; anyhow, this time he has not stolen the halter. Good morning, you rogue. The king's bull will not be stolen by you."

As soon as the herdsmen were out of sight, the little man in gray came down from the tree, took a cross road, and suspended himself afresh to a big oak close to the road. The astonishment of the king's herdsmen at the sight of the man hanging may easily be imagined.

"What is that?" exclaimed one of them. "Am I going blind? Look, here is the man who was hanging over there!"

"How stupid you are!" said his companion; "how could a man be hanging in two places at once? No doubt it is a second thief; that is all."

"I tell you it is the same one," replied the first herdsman. "I recognize him by his coat and his face."

"And I," returned the second, who was a sceptic, "will take any wager you like it is another."

The wager was accepted, the two herdsmen fastened up the king's bull to a tree and ran back to the first oak. But while they ran the little man in gray jumped down from his gibbet and quietly led the bull to the peasant's hut. There was great joy in the house, and the animal was put in the stable till it should be sold.

When the two herdsmen returned to the castle in the evening, looking very crestfallen and their heads hanging, the king saw at once that they had been made fools of. He sent for the little man in gray, who made his appearance with all the serenity of a lofty mind.

"It is you who have stolen my bull," said the king.

"Sire," replied the little man, "I did it but to obey you."

"Very good," said the king. "Here are ten gold crowns to buy back my bull: but if in two days you have not stolen my bedclothes off my bed while I am in it you will be hanged."

"Please, your majesty," said the little man, "do not ask me to do such an impossibility. You are too well guarded for a poor man like me even to be able to approach the castle."

"If you do not do it," replied the king, "I shall have the pleasure of seeing you hanged."

Night having come on, the little man in gray, who had returned to the cottage, took a long rope and a basket. Into this basket, comfortably lined with moss, he put a cat with all her family of kittens, then walking quietly through the darkness, he slipped into the castle and scaled the roof without being seen by anyone.

To find his way into a loft, and neatly saw through the flooring, and then through this opening to let himself down into the king's chamber was but a short piece of

work for our clever friend. Once there he gently turned down the royal bedclothes and laid the cat and her kittens in the bed; then he tucked in the bedclothes again, and climbing up the rope seated himself on the canopy of the bed. From this elevated post he waited patiently for what should ensue.

The palace clock struck eleven as the king and queen entered their apartment. Having unrobed, they both kneeled and said their prayers; then the king extinguished the light and the queen retired to rest.

Suddenly she gave a scream and sprang into the middle of the room.

"Have you gone out of your mind?" said the king. "Are you going to alarm the whole castle?"

"My dear," replied the queen, "I felt a burning heat, and my foot touched something hairy."

"Nonsense," returned the king, with a sarcastic smile. "Women have the pluck of hares and the wit of owls."

Upon which he bravely plunged under the bedclothes, but in an instant he jumped out, bellowing like a bull, dragging after him the cat, who had buried her claws in the calf of his leg.

On hearing the king's shouts the sentinel came to the door and knocked three times with his halberd, to ask if he needed help.

"Silence," cried the king, who was ashamed of his weakness, and did not wish to be caught in a paroxysm of nervous terror.

He struck a light, lit the lamp, and saw the cat in the middle of the bed. She had returned to that position and was tenderly licking her kittens.

"This is too bad!" he exclaimed, "without respect to our crown this insolent creature has dared to invade our royal couch with her kittens! Wait, you hussy! I am going to give you your deserts."

"It will bite you," said the queen, "perhaps it is mad."

"Do not be afraid, my dear," said the good king, and lifting up the corners of the under sheet he wrapped up the cat and her kittens; then rolling up this bundle in the

coverlet and upper sheet he made an enormous ball and threw it out of the window.

"Now," said he to the queen, "let us go into your room, and since we have taken our revenge we can sleep in peace."

The king sleeps! and maybe happy dreams attend him in his sleep; but while he is reposing, a man climbs over the roof, and having fastened a rope up there slips down it into the courtyard. He feels about for an invisible object, which he lifts on to his back, then scales the wall and runs off through the snow. If the sentinels are to be believed a phantom passed them in the night and they heard the cry of a new-born child.

The next morning, when the king awoke, he collected his thoughts and began for the first time to reflect on his nocturnal adventure. He then suspected that a trick had been played him, and that the author of the crime was very probably the little man in gray; so he sent for him at once.

The little man made his appearance carrying on his shoulder the freshly ironed sheets, and kneeling on one knee before the queen, he said respectfully:

"Your majesty knows that all I have done was only to obey the king. I hope he will be graciously pleased to pardon me."

"I have no objection to do so," said the queen, "but do not ever do it again. I should die of fright."

"And I, I do not pardon you," exclaimed the king, much annoyed that the queen dared to forgive the offender without first consulting her lord and master. "Listen to me, rascal, if by to-morrow evening you have not stolen the queen herself from the castle, to-morrow evening you shall be hanged."

"Please your majesty," cried the little man, "rather hang me at once and you will spare me four-and-twenty hours of anguish. How is it possible for me to succeed in such an attempt? It would be easier to make one's dinner off the moon."

"That is your affair, not mine," replied the king. "Meanwhile I will give orders for the gibbet to be prepared."

The little man went out from the royal presence in despair; he hid his face in his hands and sobbed as if his heart would break. For the first time the king burst out laughing.

Towards twilight a saintly capuchin, with his rosary in his hand, and his wallet on his back, came after the manner of his brotherhood to beg for broken victuals at the castle gates. When the queen had given him alms:

"Madam," said the capuchin, "God will recompense you, and in my hands now is your reward. To-morrow you know an unhappy but guilty man will doubtless be hanged within the castle walls."

"Alas!" said the queen, "I forgive him with all my heart, and I wanted to save his life."

"That is not possible," replied the monk; "but this man, who is a kind of sorcerer, can make you a valuable present before he dies. I know he possesses three wonderful secrets, one of which alone is worth a kingdom, and one of these three secrets he can bequeath to her who has compassion on him."

"What are these secrets?" asked the queen.

"By virtue of the first," answered the monk, "a wife can make her husband do all she wishes."

"Ah!" said the queen, pouting, "that is not a very wonderful recipe. Ever since the time of Eve this mystery has been handed down from mother to daughter. What is the second secret?"

"The second secret makes a person both wise and good."

"Well," said the queen, in an absent tone and quite uninterested, "what is the third?"

"The third," replied the capuchin, "secures to the woman who possesses it peerless beauty and the gift of pleasing to the last day of her life."

"My father, I wish to know that secret."

"Nothing is easier," said the monk. "Only before he dies, while he is still a free man, the sorcerer must take your two hands, and blow three times on your hair."

"Let him come," exclaimed the queen. "Go and fetch him, father."

"I cannot," replied the capuchin. "The king has given the strictest orders that that man is not to enter the castle. If he sets foot within these walls, he is a dead man. Do not grudge him the few hours that are left."

"But the king has forbidden me to go out before to-morrow evening."

"That is vexatious," said the monk. "I see you must give up this priceless gift. Nevertheless it would be delightful to possess immortal youth, always to remain young and beautiful, and above all to be always beloved."

"Alas! my father, you are quite right. The king's prohibition is the height of injustice. But if I were to attempt to go out the sentinels would prevent me. Do not look so astonished; this is the way the king treats me in his caprice. I am the most unhappy of women."

"My heart bleeds for you!" said the capuchin. "What tyranny! How barbarous! Poor woman! Well, madam, in my opinion you ought not to yield to such unreasonableness; your duty is to do as you like."

"But how?" returned the queen.

"There is a way out of the difficulty, if you decide to stand upon your rights. Get into this sack, and I will take you out of the castle at the risk of my life. And in fifty years' time, when you are still as beautiful and youthful in appearance as you are now, you will congratulate yourself on having braved your tyrant."

"Agreed," said the queen; "but are you sure that I am not being led into a trap?"

"Madam," said the holy man, raising his arm and striking his breast, "as true as I am a monk, you have nothing to fear. Besides, as long as the unhappy man is with you, I shall be there."

"And you will bring me back to the castle?"

"I swear it."

"With the secret?" added the queen.

"With the secret," replied the monk. "But if your majesty has any scruples, let us stay where we are, and let the recipe die with the man who discovered it, unless he prefers to give it to some more trusting lady."

For answer the queen courageously got into the sack, the capuchin drew the string, shouldered the burden, and traversed the courtyard with measured steps. On his way he met the king, who was making his round.

"You have made a good collection I see," said the king.

"Sire," replied the monk, "your majesty's charity is inexhaustible. I am afraid I have abused it. Perhaps I



"No, no," said the king; "take it all, father." (P. 91)

should do better to leave the sack here and all that it contains."

"No, no," said the king; "take it all, father, and good riddance. I do not imagine that all you have got there is worth much. You will have a poor feast."

"May your majesty sup with as good an appetite as I shall," returned the monk, in a fatherly tone; and he passed on.

The bell sounded for supper, and the king entered the

hall rubbing his hands. He was pleased with himself, and in hopes of having his revenge, two reasons for a good appetite.

"The queen not down yet?" he enquired, in an ironical voice. "I am not surprised. Ladies are famed for their unpunctuality."

He was seating himself at the table, when three soldiers with crossed halberds pushed into the hall the little man in gray.

"Sire," said one of the guards, "this rascal has had the audacity to enter the courtyard of the castle, notwithstanding the royal prohibition. We would have hanged him on the spot without interrupting your majesty at supper, but he pretends that he has a message from the queen, and that he is the bearer of a state secret."

"The queen!" exclaimed the king, thunderstruck. "Where is she? Wretch! what have you done?"

"I have stolen her," said the little man, coolly.

"And how?" said the king.

"Sire, the capuchin who had such a big sack on his back, and to whom your majesty condescended to say 'Take it all, and good riddance!—'"

"That was you!" exclaimed the king; "but in that case, you scoundrel, I myself am in danger. One of these days you will be stealing me, and my kingdom into the bargain."

"Sire, I have something yet to request of you."

"You alarm me," said the king. "Who are you, then? A wizard?"

"No, sire; I am only the Prince of Holar. You have a marriageable daughter, and I had just requested her hand of you when stress of weather obliged me, with my equerry, to take shelter at the house of the vicar of Skalholt. There chance threw in my path a half-witted peasant, and made me play the part you know of. As for the rest, all that I have done has been only with the wish to obey and please your majesty."

"Very good," said the king, "I understand, or rather I do not understand. No matter, prince, I prefer to have

you for a son-in-law rather than a neighbour. As soon as the queen comes——”

“Sire, she is here. My equerry has attended her back to the palace.”

The queen soon entered, a little ashamed of her simpleness, and of being so easily taken in, but was quickly consoled on hearing that she was to have such a clever man for a son-in-law.

“What is the famous secret?” whispered she to the Prince of Holar; “you owe it me.”

“The true secret of preserving beauty for ever,” said the prince, “is to be forever beloved.”

“And the way to be ever beloved?” asked the queen.

“Is to be ever good and guileless,” replied the prince, “and to carry out your husband’s wishes.”

“He dares call himself a sorcerer!” cried the queen indignantly, raising her hands to heaven.

“Let us have done with these mysterious whisperings,” said the king, who was already beginning to feel alarmed. “Prince, when you are our son-in-law, you will have more time than you will care for in which to talk to your mother-in-law. Supper is getting cold. Let us come to table! We will devote this evening to pleasure only. You must amuse yourself, son-in-law, for to-morrow is your marriage-day.”

After making this remark, which he thought rather clever, the king looked at the queen, but her face wore an expression which made him instantly rub his chin thoughtfully, and watch the flies wheeling about in close vicinity to the ceiling.

So terminates the Prince of Holar’s adventures. Happy days have no history. We know, however, that he succeeded his father-in-law to the throne, and that he became a great king.

PERLINO
(A NEAPOLITAN STORY)

CHAPTER I
VIOLETTA



Violetta and her father

AT one time there lived at Pæstum a merchant who was as good as bread, sweet as honey, and rich as the sea. His name was Cecco. He was a widower, and had only one daughter, whom he cherished as the apple of his eye. Violetta, for such was the name of this beloved child, was as white as milk

and as red as strawberries. She had long black hair, eyes of heavenly blue, velvety cheeks like a butterfly's wing, and a tiny mole for a beauty-spot at the corner of her mouth.

When Violetta was fifteen, Cecco was very anxious she should marry. This was a great trouble to him. "The orange-tree," thought he, "opens its flower to the sun without knowing who will gather it; so a father brings up a daughter, and, for long years, cherishes her like the apple of his eye, in order that, one fine day, a stranger may steal

his treasure without even a 'Thank you.' Where can I find a husband worthy of my Violetta? No matter, she is rich enough to choose one to please herself; clever and beautiful as she is, she would tame a tiger if it was her business to do so."

So the good Cecco often tried to talk about marriage to his daughter; but he might just as well have thrown his discourses into the sea. As soon as ever he touched on that topic, Violetta dropped her head and complained of a headache. Her poor father, more troubled than a monk who loses his memory in the middle of his sermon, used directly to change the conversation, and draw from his pocket some present for her which he always kept in reserve. Sometimes it was a ring, or a chaplet, or a gold thimble. Violetta would then embrace him, and a smile would return to her lips, like sunshine after rain.

One day, however, Cecco, more prudent than usual, had begun where he usually left off, and Violetta held in her hand so lovely a necklace that she had difficulty in being sick or sorry, and thus the worthy man returned to the charge.

"O my love, and joy of my heart," he said, caressing her. "Do you not feel that I am growing old? My beard is getting gray, and warns me every day that it is time that I should choose a protector for you.

"Why not do like all other girls? Does it kill them to marry? What is a husband? He is a bird in a cage who sings as one wishes him to. If your poor mother were still alive, she would tell you that she never had to cry to get her own way. She was always queen and empress at home. I did not dare to breathe in her presence any more than I dare in yours, and I cannot get accustomed to my liberty."

"Father," said Violetta, taking him by the chin, "you are master, and it is for you to command. Dispose of my hand as you choose. I will marry whenever you wish and whoever you like. I only ask one thing."

"Whatever it is, you shall have it," exclaimed Cecco, charmed at a good sense to which he was not accustomed.

"Very well, dear father. All I ask is that the husband you give me shall not have a face like a dog."

"What a childish idea!" cried the merchant, beaming with pleasure. "How true it is that beauty and folly usually go together! Though you have not your mother's wit, still you need not be quite foolish! Do you think that a sensible man like myself, do you think that the richest merchant in Pæstum would be so stupid as to accept for a son-in-law a man with a face like a dog? Make yourself happy on that score. I will choose for you, or rather you shall choose for yourself, the handsomest and most amiable man you can find for your husband. If you must have a prince, I am rich enough to buy one."

A few days later, Cecco gave a grand dinner. He invited the most eligible young men for twenty leagues round. The banquet was gorgeous, everybody ate a great deal and drank even more, and each guest thoroughly enjoyed himself, and talked freely and without reserve. When dessert was on the table, Cecco withdrew to a corner of the apartment, and taking Violetta on his knee, whispered to her:

"My dear child, look at that good-looking young man, with blue eyes and his hair parted down the middle. Do you think any woman could be unhappy with such an angel?"

"You cannot be thinking of him for my husband, father," answered Violetta smiling, "he is just like a greyhound."

"That is true," exclaimed Cecco, "he has just the head of a greyhound! How could that have escaped me? But that handsome officer with the low forehead, short neck, prominent eyes, and broad chest, there is a man for you, what do you say to him?"

"Why, father, he is for all the world like a mastiff! I should always be afraid of his biting me."

"He really is rather like a mastiff," replied Cecco sighing, "we will not speak of him, perhaps you would prefer somebody graver and older. If women knew how to choose they would never have a husband who was less than forty. Up to that age women only find dandies who allow themselves to be adored, and it is only when a man has reached forty that he is capable of loving and obeying. What do you say to that judge, who talks so well and likes to hear

himself talk? His hair is getting grey, but what does that matter? A man is not wiser with grey hairs than he is with black."

"You are not keeping your promise, father. Do you not see that with his red eyes and his white curls over his ears that man looks like a poodle dog?"

It was the same with all the guests; not one escaped the lash of Violetta's tongue. This one, who sighed trembling, was like a Turkish dog, and that one, with long black hair and gentle eyes, had the face of a spaniel. Nobody was spared.

"Violetta is really too clever," thought Cecco, "I shall never get her to listen to reason;" whereupon he went into a violent passion, called her obstinate, ungrateful, empty-headed, and silly, and finished by threatening to put her in a convent for the rest of her life. Violetta wept, threw herself at his feet, implored his pardon, and promised never to answer him again. The next morning he rose, after a wakeful night, embraced his daughter, thanked her for not having red eyes, and quietly waited until the wind which turns all weathercocks should blow from the other side of his house.

This time he was not wrong. More things happen in one hour with women than happen in ten years with men.

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CHAPTER II

BIRTH AND BETROTHAL OF PERLINO

ONE day there happened to be a fair in the neighbourhood, and Cecco asked his daughter what she would like him to bring her.

"Father," she said, "if you love me, bring me half a cantaro of Palermo sugar, and as many sweet almonds; added to that, five or six bottles of perfume, a little musk and amber, about thirty or forty pearls, two sapphires, a handful of garnets and rubies; and bring me also a dozen skeins of gold thread, ten yards of green velvet, a piece of cherry coloured silk, and be sure you do not forget a watering-pot and silver trowel."

The merchant was amazed at his daughter's whims, and the astounding variety of her orders; but he had been too good a husband not to know that in dealing with women it is better to obey them than to reason with them, so he returned home in the evening with a mule heavily laden. What would he not have done to win a smile from his child?

As soon as Violetta received all these presents she went up to her room, and set to work to make a paste of sugar and almonds, which she sprinkled with rose-water and jasmine scent. Then, like a potter or sculptor, she kneaded this paste with her silver trowel, and moulded the most beautiful little man that it is possible to imagine. She made the hair with threads of gold, the eyes with sapphires, the teeth with pearls, the tongue and lips with rubies; after which she dressed him in velvet and silk, and christened him "Perlino," because he was pink-and-white like mother-of-pearl.

When she had completed her masterpiece and placed it on the table, Violetta clapped her hands and began dancing round Perlino. She sang to him the sweetest little songs, addressed the tenderest words to him, and blew him kisses enough to quicken a piece of marble into life; but all in vain, the doll never stirred. Violetta cried with vexation; when all at once, she remembered that she had a fairy godmother. What godmother, especially a fairy one, refuses the first request offered her? Violetta begged so fervently, that her godmother heard her two hundred leagues off, and granted her request. She blew, and a fairy need do nothing more to work wonders. Suddenly Perlino winked one eye, then both, turned his head right and left, then he sneezed exactly like anybody else; then, while Violetta laughed and cried for delight, Perlino walked on the table with his little steps as gravely as a duenna returning from church, or a judge mounting the bench.

More enchanted than if she had won the kingdom of Italy in a lottery, Violetta lifted up Perlino in her arms, kissed him on both cheeks, and set him gently on the ground; then, holding her gown with both hands, she began dancing round him as she sang:

"Dance away, O dance with me!
 Dear Perlino, while I sing.
 Dance away, O dance with me!
 If for thee I wear the ring.
 Dance away, O dance with me!
 I the Queen, and thou the King.

"We both shall taste the sweets of life,
 Joy of my eyes, behold thy wife!
 We'll leap, and bound,
 And dance around.
 This our life shall be.
 Only obey and humour me,
 My little husband constantly,
 And gods of our felicity
 Shall envious be.

"Dance away, O dance with me!
 Dear Perlino, while I sing.
 Dance away, O dance with me!
 If for thee I wear the ring.
 Dance away, O dance with me!
 I the Queen, and thou the King."

Cecco, who was going over his accounts because he thought it very hard not to have made more than a million ducats in the year, could hear in his counting-house the noise that was going on overhead. "Per Baccho!" he exclaimed, "there is something odd going on up there. I think they must be quarrelling."

He went upstairs, and, pushing open the door, the prettiest sight in the world met his eyes. Facing his daughter, who was rosy with pleasure, was Cupid personified—Cupid in a doublet of silk and velvet. His two hands in the hands of his little mistress, Perlino, jumping both feet at once, danced and danced as if he would never stop.

As soon as Violetta caught sight of her father, she made him a low courtesy, and, presenting her lover to him, "My lord and father," she said, "you have always told me that you wanted to see me married. To obey and please you, I have chosen a husband after my own heart."

"You have done well, my child," replied Cecco, who guessed the mystery. "Every woman should take example by you. I know more than one who would cut off a finger,

and that not a little one, in order to manufacture a husband exactly to their taste, a little husband all made of sweetmeats and orange-flowers. Tell them your secret, you will dry many tears. For two thousand years they have been pitying themselves, and they will still be pitying themselves in the course of another two thousand years for being misunderstood and sacrificed."

Whereupon he embraced his son-in-law, betrothed them on the spot, and asked for two days to prepare for the wedding. It required as much time as that in which to invite all their friends round, and to prepare a banquet that should not be unworthy of the richest merchant of Pæstum.

CHAPTER III

PERLINO IS CARRIED OFF



The Marchioness of Silver Crowns

PEOPLE came from far and near to see such a novelty in the way of weddings. Rich or poor, young or old, friends or rivals, everyone wanted to see Perlino. Unfortunately there is never a wedding without some trouble; and Violetta's godmother had not foreseen what would happen.

Among the guests was a person of great importance—the Marchioness of Silver Crowns. She was very wicked and very old, her skin was yellow and wrinkled, she had a hooked nose and pointed chin and hollow eyes, but she was so amazingly rich that everyone bowed down to her and disputed the honour of kissing her hand. Cecco greeted her with a most reverential bow, and, placing her on his right hand, presented his daughter and son-in-law to the lady, who, having more

than a hundred millions, did him the honour of dining at his table.

During all the time of the banquet Lady Silver Crowns could not take her eyes off Perlino. She longed to possess him.

The Marchioness lived in a castle that was worthy of Fairyland. It was built of gold, and the paving stones were of silver. In this castle there was a gallery in which she had collected every curiosity in the world—a clock which always struck the hour you wished, an elixir which cured gout and sick headache, a philter which changed sorrow into joy, a Cupid's arrow—in fact everything that nobody has ever seen, or ever will see, anywhere else—but there still wanted a gem to this treasure-house, and that was Perlino.

Dessert had not been put on the table before the lady had made up her mind to carry him off. She was very avaricious, but whatever she wanted she would have, at no matter what price. She bought everything that was to be sold, and what was not for sale she stole, being quite sure that at Naples justice was only for poor and insignificant people.

As soon as they rose from the table the lady went up to Perlino, who, having only been born three days, was not aware of the wickedness there is in the world. She told him of all the beautiful and grand things that were in the Castle of Silver Crowns.

“Come with me, my dear young friend,” she said, “and I will give you whatever place you like in my household. Choose which you would like to be; a page dressed in silk and gold, or a chamberlain with a key in diamonds in the middle of your back, or the porter with a silver halberd and a wide gold shoulder belt which will make you shine brighter than the sun? Say the word and your wish shall be granted.”

The poor innocent boy was quite dazzled, but, though he had only breathed his native air so short a time, still he was a Neapolitan, that is to say, very far from stupid.

“Madam,” he replied, simply, “people say that work is for oxen, and that there is nothing so healthful as repose; I should prefer a post where there is nothing to be done and a great deal to be earned.”

"What!" said the Marchioness, "do you wish to be a senator already at your age?"

"Exactly so, madam," interrupted Perlino; "and better twice than once, so as to have double salary."

"Never mind," she replied; "in the meantime come and let me show you my carriage and the English coachman and the six grey horses," and she led him away toward the hall.

"And Violetta?" feebly murmured Perlino.

"Violetta is following us," replied the lady, pulling the imprudent young fellow, who suffered himself to be led away. Once in the courtyard she made him admire her horses, which, as they pawed the ground, shook their red silk nets with the little golden bells; then she made him get into the carriage to try the cushions and look at himself in the glass. Then all at once she shut the carriage door, the coachman whipped up his horses, and they were off and away to the Castle of Silver Crowns.

Violetta, meanwhile, received with the most charming grace the compliments of the assembly, but, soon surprised at not seeing her bridegroom, who was always at her side like her shadow, she ran into all the rooms; he was not there; then she went up on the roof of the house to see if Perlino might have gone there to breathe a little fresh air, but there was no one. In the distance she descried a cloud of dust and a coach with six horses which were galloping towards the mountains.

There was no longer room for doubt. Perlino had been carried off. At this sight Violetta felt her heart stop, and in another moment, without remembering she was bareheaded, with her wedding wreath on, her lace gown and satin shoes, she rushed out of her father's house and ran after the carriage, calling loudly after Perlino, and stretching out her arms to him.

Vain words that the wind carried away. The ungrateful fellow was wholly occupied with the honeyed tongue of his new mistress; he played with the rings she wore on her fingers, and thought how he would awake the next day a prince and a grand gentleman. Alas! There are older

people than he who are just as foolish! When do people learn that goodness and beauty do more to make home happy than riches? Not till it is too late, and they have no longer the teeth to gnaw the chains which they have themselves hung on.

CHAPTER IV NIGHT AND DAY

POOR Violetta ran all day; ditches, streams, thickets, briars, nothing stopped her; they who suffer for love's sake feel no pain. When evening drew on she found herself in a dark wood, worn out with fatigue and dying of hunger, and her hands and feet all bleeding. She grew frightened. She gazed round her without daring to move; it seemed to her that thousands of eyes looked threateningly at her out of the darkness. Trembling she sank at the foot of a tree, and in a low voice called on Perlino to bid him a last farewell.

As she held her breath—for she was too frightened to breathe—she heard the trees near her talking among themselves.

“Neighbour,” said a locust tree to an olive, of which only the trunk remained, “here is a young girl who is doing a very imprudent thing in lying on the ground. In an hour's time the wolves will be coming out of their den, and if they spare her, the cold and the dews of the morning will give her a fever from which she will never recover. Why does not she climb up into our branches? She might sleep there in peace, and I would willingly give her some of my pods to revive her exhausted frame.”

“You are quite right, neighbour,” replied the olive, “but the child would do better still if, before going to rest, she were to put her hand into my hollow trunk. The clothes and the bagpipe of a piper are hidden there. When one is exposed to the night air, goat-skin is not to be despised, and for a girl on a journey a lace gown and satin shoes are but a light costume.”

How cheered and comforted Violetta felt on overhearing

these kind words! When she had groped about for the coarse woollen waistcoat, the goatskin cloak, the bagpipe, and the piper's pointed hat, she bravely climbed the locust tree, ate the sweet fruit, quenched her thirst with the evening dew, and after wrapping herself up well, lay down as comfortably as she could between two branches. The tree sheltered her with its fatherly arms, wood-pigeons came out of their nests and covered her with leaves, the wind rocked her to sleep like a child, and she slept and dreamed of her lover.

On awaking the next morning she felt frightened. The day was fine and cloudless, but in the silence of the forest the poor child realised her loneliness; all was life and movement around her, but who thought of the poor forsaken girl? So she began to sing to call to her assistance everything that passed her heedlessly by:

“O wind of morning, say
Where is my love to-day?
'Mid blossoms blooming bright,
Born in the balmy night?
Say has he wept for me?
Me has he prayed to see?
Give me new hope again,
Tell me his love and pain.

“Gay butterfly and bee,
Pursue my love for me;
The brightest flower you meet,
The jasmine scenting sweet,
Are not so fair as he.

“His brow eclipses quite
The lily pure and white,
The violet her scent
For his breath has lent,
And the iris growing high
Is blue as his azure eye.

“Seek, O swallow, seek.
O birds, where is he? speak.
'Mid the thyme and asphodel;
By the brook in yon grassy dell?
O far from him I weep,
My grief has banished sleep.
Bring me my love again,
Banish my grief and pain.”

The breeze passed murmuring by, the bee set off to seek its booty, the swallow chased the flies right up into the sky, the birds tried to out-sing each other in the foliage, and no one troubled themselves about Violetta. She came down from the tree sighing and walked on straight before her, trusting to her own true heart to find Perlino.

CHAPTER V

THE THREE ADVENTURES

THERE was a torrent that descended the mountain, and its bed being partly dry, Violetta took this road. Already the oleanders had emerged from the water, their heads covered with flowers. Cecco's daughter plunged into this green pathway, followed by the butterflies which hovered round her, like round a lily which the wind stirs. She walked along faster than an exile returning home, but the heat was oppressive, and toward noon she was obliged to stop and rest. As she drew near a little pool, meaning to bathe her burning feet in it, she caught sight of a bee drowning. Violetta stretched out her little foot and the creature climbed on to it. As soon as it was dry the bee remained quite still for some time, as if to get back its breath, then it shook its wet wings, and stroking its body with its legs, which were as fine as a thread of silk, it dried and smoothed itself, and then flying off, came buzzing round her who had saved its life.

"Violetta," it said, "you have not rendered a service to one who is ungrateful. I know where you are going; let me go with you. When I am tired I will rest on your head. If ever you have need of me, only say, '*Nebuchadnezzar, peace of heart is worth more than gold;*' perhaps I shall be able to help you."

"Never," thought Violetta, "shall I be able to say: *Nebuchadnezzar*—"

"What do you want?" asked the Bee.

"Nothing, nothing," replied Cecco's daughter. "I shall not want you till I find Perlino."

She continued her road with a lightened heart. At

the end of a quarter of an hour she heard a little cry; it was a white mouse which a hedgehog had wounded, and which had only escaped from its enemy bleeding and half dead. Violetta took compassion on the poor little creature, and though she was in such haste, stopped to bathe its wounds and give it one of the sweet pods that she had saved from her breakfast.



*Violetta stretched out her little foot and the creature
climbed on to it* (P. 105)

“Violetta,” said the mouse, “you will not find me ungrateful. I know where you are going. Put me in your pocket with the rest of the locusts. If ever you have need of me, only say, ‘*Tricché, varlacchè, gold embroidered coats and hearts of lackeys:*’ perhaps I may be able to help you.”

Violetta slipped the mouse into her pocket, so that it might nibble away at its leisure, and continued her ascent of

the torrent bed. Twilight drew on and she was approaching the mountain, when suddenly a squirrel fell at her feet from the top of a high oak, pursued by a horrid owl. Cecco's daughter was not timid, and she struck the owl with her bagpipe and sent it off, then she picked up the squirrel, which was more stunned than hurt by its fall, and by her care revived it.

"Violetta," said the squirrel, "I am not ungrateful. I know where you are going. Put me on your shoulder and gather some nuts for me so that my teeth do not grow too long. If ever you have need of me, only say, '*Patati, patata, look and you will see;*' perhaps I shall be able to help you."

Violetta was rather surprised at these three adventures; she did not in the least count upon this verbal gratitude. What could such feeble friends do for her? "What does it matter," she thought, "right is right. Come what may, I have taken compassion on the suffering."

At this moment the moon came out from behind a cloud, and its white light illumined the old castle of Silver Crowns.

CHAPTER VI

THE CASTLE OF SILVER CROWNS

THE view of the castle was not reassuring. On the top of a mountain, which was a mass of fallen rocks, battlements of gold were to be seen, and silver turrets, and roofs of sapphires and rubies; but these were surrounded by deep moats, the water of which was all covered with duckweed, and defended by drawbridges, portcullises, parapets, enormous bars and loopholes, out of which cannons showed all the apparatus of war and slaughter. The grand palace was only a prison. Violetta with difficulty climbed the tortuous paths, and at last, at the end of a narrow passage, came to a grated door fastened with an enormous lock. She called; no answer. She rang the bell, and directly a kind of jailer appeared, blacker and uglier than Cerberus.

"Be off with you, beggar!" he exclaimed, "or I will

beat you. This is no place for poverty. At the castle of Silver Crowns alms are only given to those who are in need of nothing."

Poor Violetta went away crying.

"Cheer up!" said the squirrel, cracking a nut, "play on the bagpipe."

"But I have never played it," replied Cecco's daughter

"So much the more the reason why you should do so now," said the squirrel. "One does not know what one can do till one tries. Blow away."

Violetta set to work to play with all her might, moving her fingers, and singing into the instrument, and the bagpipe inflated itself and played a tarantella which would have brought the dead to life. At this sound the squirrel jumped down on the ground, and the mouse soon followed his example, and there they were dancing and jumping like true Neapolitans, while the bee flew round them buzzing. It was a sight worth paying to see.

At the sound of this pleasant music the black shutters of the castle were seen to open. The maids of honour of the Marchioness of Silver Crowns had no objection to look out from time to time to see if the flies were always wheeling round in the same fashion. It is all very well not to be curious, but it is not every day one hears a tarantella played by such a pretty shepherd boy as Violetta.

"Little fellow," said one, "come here!"

"Shepherd," cried another, "come to me!"

And they all smiled on him, but the door remained closed.

"Ladies," said Violetta, taking off her hat, "be as good as you are beautiful. Night has surprised me in the mountain; I have neither food nor shelter. Give me a piece of bread and a corner in the stables. My little dancers will amuse you all the evening."

At the castle of Silver Crowns thieves were so much dreaded that orders were strict that nobody was admitted after dark. These young ladies knew this very well, but in this highly respectable palace there was always a rope at hand, and they threw an end out of the window and Violetta

was hoisted into a spacious chamber with all her menagerie. There she had to blow for hours, and dance and sing without ever getting a chance to open her mouth to ask where Perlino was.

No matter, she was happy in feeling she was under the same roof with him. She thought her lover's heart must be beating, as her own did. She was so simple, she thought that it was sufficient to love to be loved in return. Heaven knows what beautiful dreams she had that night.

CHAPTER VII

VERY early the next morning Violetta, who had been put to sleep in the barn, mounted on the roofs and gazed around her, but though she ran to every side, she only saw grated towers and deserted gardens. She came down again in tears, though her three little friends did all they could to comfort her.

In the courtyard paved with silver she found the three maids of honour seated in a circle and spinning gold and silver thread.

"Go away," they cried, "if our mistress were to see your rags she would discharge us. Leave this at once, wretched bagpipe-player, and never come back, at least, not unless you have become a prince or a banker."

"Go away?" said Violetta; "not yet, my pretty ladies. Allow me to be your servant; I will be so gentle and so obedient that you will never regret having kept me near you."

For answer the eldest maid of honour, who was tall, thin, plain, sallow, and angular, rose from her seat, at the same time calling to the jailer, who made his appearance frowning terribly and brandishing his halberd.

"I am lost," cried the poor girl; "I shall never see my Perlino again!"

"Violetta," said the squirrel gravely, "gold is tried in the furnace and a friend in misfortune."

"You are right," exclaimed Cecco's daughter. "*Nebuchadnezzar, peace of heart is worth more than gold.*"

Immediately the bee flew off, and, lo and behold, a beautiful crystal carriage with a ruby pole and emerald wheels entered the courtyard, wherefrom no one knew. The equipage was drawn by four black dogs as big as one's fist. Four great beetles, dressed as postilions, drove with light hand this tiny team. Inside the carriage, on soft cushions of light satin, lolled a young snipe in a little red hat and a silken robe, which was so ample that it overflowed both wheels. In one claw the lady held a fan, and in the other a scent-bottle and a pocket-handkerchief embroidered with her coat of arms and trimmed with wide lace. Beside her, half buried under the billows of silk, sat an owl looking very much bored, with lack-lustre eye and bald head, and so old that his beak crossed like a pair of scissors when opened. They were a newly-married couple who were paying their wedding visits; a very fashionable couple, such as the mistress of Silver Crowns highly approved of.

At sight of this marvel a shout of pleasure and admiration awoke the echoes of the palace. In his astonishment the jailer let fall his pike, while the young ladies ran after the carriage, which was being carried along at a gallop by the four spaniels as if the Emperor of the Turks were inside. The unusual noise alarmed the Lady of Silver Crowns, who was in constant fear of being robbed. She hastened to the spot in a fury, determined to discharge on the spot all her maids of honour. She paid for being treated with respect, and she insisted on having her money's worth.

But when she caught sight of the equipage, and the owl who saluted her with a movement of his beak, and the snipe who three times waved her handkerchief with a delicious air of nonchalance, the lady's anger vanished.

"I must have that," she cried. "What is the price of it?"

The marchioness's voice terrified Violetta, but her love for Perlino gave her courage. She answered that, poor as she was, she loved this toy more than all the gold in the world. She would never part from her carriage, and could not think of selling it for the Castle of Silver Crowns.



*At sight of this marvel a shout of pleasure . . . awoke the
echoes of the palace (P. 110)*

"beggars!" murmured the lady. "People who have a proper respect for money, and who are ready to do anything for a crown," she said, in a threatening tone; "I must have that carriage," she said, "I must have it."

Violetta, much moved, "it is true I should be happy to offer it to you if you would do me the honour

to be so responsive," thought the marchioness. "What is it that you want?"

"I am told that you have the curiosities in the world and if there is something still more wonderful than this carriage my treasure shall be

of Silver Crowns shrugged her shoulders and led Violetta into a great gallery, which has showed her all its treasures; a table of a moonbeam plaited and pink lilies, green roses, an eternal urn, and many other rarities; but the one thing she cared about.

for astonishment and admiration. She saw indifference.

These wonders are a very different show; the carriage is mine."

Violetta, "all these things are dead; life is living. You could not compare these stones and shells as if one had met them in life."

"I will show you the almond paste, who sings like an academician."

Violetta.

of Silver Crowns, "my maids of honour have been talking

with the instinct of fear. "On consideration," she added, "leave this castle. I do not wish for your childish toy."

"Madam," said Violetta, trembling, "let me speak to this marvellous Perlino, and you take the carriage."

"No," said the marchioness, "go away, and take your creatures with you."

"Let me only see Perlino."

"No, no," answered the lady.

"Only let me sleep one night at his door," returned Violetta in floods of tears. "See what a gem you are refusing," added she, kneeling on one knee and presenting the carriage to the Lady of Silver Crowns.

At this sight the marchioness hesitated; then smiled. In an instant she had thought of how she could deceive Violetta, and get for nothing that which she coveted.

"Agreed," she said, seizing the carriage. "You shall sleep at Perlino's door to-night, and you shall even see him, but I forbid you to speak to him."

When evening came, the Lady of Silver Crowns called Perlino to have supper with her. When she had made him eat and drink well, which was easy with a boy of such a yielding disposition, she poured some excellent Capri wine into a red goblet, and drawing from her pocket a crystal box, she took from it a red powder, which she threw into the wine.

"Drink that, my child," she said to Perlino, "and tell me what you think of it."

Perlino, who always did what he was told, swallowed the drink in a single gulp.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, "it is horrible, it is poison!"

"Idiot!" said the marchioness; "it is gold that you have been drinking, and he who has once drunk of it will always drink it. Take this second glass, you will find it better than the first."

The lady was right. Scarcely had the young fellow emptied the cup than he was seized with an ardent thirst. "More! More!" he cried. He did not wish to leave the table. To induce him to go to bed, the marchioness was obliged to make him up a large packet of this wonderful

powder, which he put carefully in his pocket, as a remedy against every evil.

Poor Perlino! It was indeed a poison he had taken, and that the most terrible of all. Who drinks dissolved gold has his heart frozen as long as the fatal beverage is inside him. He knows nothing, loves nothing; neither father, mother, wife, children, friends, nor country. He only thinks of himself. He longs to drink, and would drink all the gold and all the blood in the world without satisfying a thirst which nothing can quench.



Meanwhile what was Violetta doing? The time dragged as heavily to her as a day without bread to a starving man. So, as soon as night had put on her black mask to open the ball of the stars, Violetta ran to Perlino's door, convinced that as soon as he should see her, Perlino would throw himself into her arms. How her

This wonderful powder Perlino put carefully in his pocket
(P. 115)

heart beat as she heard him come up the stairs! What grief it was when the ungrateful boy passed in without even looking at her!

His door double locked and the key taken out, Violetta threw herself on a mat that they had given her out of pity; there she melted into tears, holding her hands to her mouth to stifle her sobs. She did not dare to complain for fear they should send her away; but when the hour came that the stars alone were awake, she softly knocked at the door, and sang below her breath:

“Perlino, dost hear me? I come thee to free.
Come quick, or I'll die, love,
Divided from thee!
Open to me! for thy love, dear, I sigh,
I burn, love, I freeze, love, without thee I die!”

Alas! She sang as much as she liked, but nothing stirred inside the room. Perlino snored away, and dreamed of nothing but his gold powder. The hours dragged heavily, without bringing hope. However long and sad the night was, the morning was still more so. The Lady of Silver Crowns arrived at daybreak.

"I hope you are satisfied, my pretty piper," said she with a malicious smile. "You have been paid for your coach as you asked to be."

"May you be equally satisfied all the days of your life!" murmured Violetta. "I have passed so bad a night that I shall not soon forget it."

CHAPTER VIII

TRICCHE, VARLACCHE

CECCO'S daughter withdrew sadly; there was no more hope, she must return to her father and forget him who had ceased to love her. She crossed the courtyard, followed by the maids of honour, who mocked at her simplicity. On reaching the grated door she turned round as if seeking one parting glance, but finding herself alone, her courage forsook her, and she dissolved in tears and hid her face in her hands.

"Be off with you, wretched beggar!" cried the jailer, seizing Violetta by the collar and shaking her violently.

"Be off!" said Violetta, "Never! *Tricche, varlacche,*" she cried, "*gold embroidered coats and hearts of lackeys!*"

And, lo and behold, the mouse jumped upon the jailer's nose and bit it till the blood came; then, right in front of the gate, rises an aviary as large as a Chinese pagoda. The bars were of silver, the places for seed and water were made of diamonds; instead of millet there were pearls, instead of toy baubles there were ducats threaded on ribbons of various colours. In the middle of this magnificent cage, on a stick with bars across at different heights which turned with every breath of wind, jumped and twittered thousands of birds of every kind and country; humming birds, parrots, cardinal-birds, blackbirds, linnets, canaries, and others.

All this feathered crowd whistled the same air, each in his own note. Violetta, who understood the language of birds as much as that of flowers, listened to what all these voices said, and translated the song for the maids of honour, much surprised to find such unusual wisdom among parrots and canaries.

“A fig for Liberty!
Hurray for a cage!
Well fed and well treated,
In winter well heated,
Best life for a sage.”

After these joyous songs a great silence supervened. An old red and green parrot with a sober and serious air raised his leg, and, as he twirled round on the other, sang in a nasal tone, or rather croaked, what follows:

“The nightingale’s a gentleman,
All clad in russet brown,
He’s very plain;
We hear his strain
But when the moon shines down,
So proud he is, he dwells apart,
Pretending to be gay,
But no one likes his silly song,
Whatever they may say.
Such foolish birds should surely be
Confined with bolt and bar,
They do not care for Fortune’s smile:
What owls these creatures are!”

and all the birds, carried away by this eloquence, began singing in a piercing voice:

“A fig for Liberty!” etc.

While everybody was gathered round the magic aviary, the Lady of Silver Crowns hastened to the spot. As may be believed, she was not the last to covet this marvel.

“Boy,” she said to the piper, “will you sell me that cage on the same terms as the carriage?”

“Willingly, madam,” replied Violetta, who wished for nothing better.

“Agreed!” said the lady, “it is only beggars who would be so foolish,”

That evening everything happened as on the previous one. Perlino, drunk with his solution of gold, entered his chamber without even raising his eyes. Violetta threw herself on the mat outside more miserable than ever.

She sang like on the first day, she wept to melt a stone, but in vain. Perlino slept like a log; his mistress's sobs only lulled him as the murmur of the ocean or the wind would have done. Toward midnight Violetta's three friends, distressed at her grief, consulted together. "It is not natural that the young fellow should sleep like that," said the squirrel. "We must get in and wake him," said the mouse. "But how can we get in?" asked the bee, who had in vain sought for a chink all along the wall. "I can easily manage that," said the mouse. And quickly it set to work to gnaw a little corner of the door; this was enough for the bee, who slipped into Perlino's chamber.

There he was, quietly sleeping on his back, snoring with the regularity of a canon taking his siesta. This calmness irritated the bee, and it stung Perlino on the lip. Perlino sighed and gave himself a blow on the cheek, but he did not awake.

"The boy has been drugged," said the bee on returning to Violetta to comfort her. "There is magic somewhere. What shall we do?"

"Stop," said the mouse, who had never ceased gnawing, "it is my turn to go in now, and I will wake him, even if I must eat his heart to do so."

"No, no," cried Violetta, "I will not allow any one to harm my Perlino."

The mouse was already inside the room. To jump on to the bed and get under the coverlid was only a game to the rats' cousin. It went straight to Perlino's breast; but before making a hole there, it listened a moment, but his heart was not beating. There was no longer any doubt! Perlino was enchanted, bewitched.

As it brought back this news the dawn was already breaking. The wicked marchioness made her appearance smiling as usual. Violetta, furious at being tricked, and biting her nails with anger, nevertheless made a low bow to the lady as she murmured "Till to-morrow,"

CHAPTER IX
PATATI, PATATA

THIS time Violetta went downstairs in better heart. Hope had come back to her. Like the day before, she found the maids of honour in the court, spinning with their distaffs.

"Come away, pretty piper," they cried, laughing, "do another of your tricks for us!"

"To please you, gracious ladies," replied Violetta: "*Patati, patata,*" said she, "*look sharp and you will see.*"

At that moment the squirrel threw down on the ground one of his nuts, and directly a theatre of marionettes appeared. The curtain drew up, the scene represented a law court. At the far end, on the bench covered with red velvet, star-spangled, sat the magistrate, a great big cat, highly respectable-looking, though there was a crumb or two of cheese sticking to his long moustache. With a meditative air, his hands crossed in his long sleeves, and his eyes shut, he looked for all the world as if he were asleep, if ever justice sleeps in the cat kingdom.

To the side was a wooden bench where three mice were chained, whose teeth had been drawn and their ears cut, by way of precaution. They were suspected, which in Naples means convicted, of having looked too closely at a skin of old lard. Facing the criminals was a dais of black cloth, on which was inscribed in letters of gold this sentence, from the great poet and magician, Virgil:

"Crush the mice, but humour the cats."

Below the dais stood the barrister, a weasel with retreating forehead, red eyes, and pointed tongue. His hand was on his heart; he was making an eloquent harangue demanding the law to strangle the mice. His words flew on like water from a spring. In a most tender and penetrating voice the good man implored and solicited the death of these dreadful little creatures, so that one really grew indignant at their callousness. One felt that they failed in their obvious duty in not offering their heads to be cut off at once, to calm

the emotion and dry the tears of this worthy weasel, who was so full of grief.

When the barrister had finished his funeral oration, a young rat rose to defend the criminals.

He had already settled his glass, taken off his cap, and shaken out his sleeves, when, out of respect for the right of free defence, and in the interest of the accused, the cat refused him permission to speak. Then, in a solemn voice, Master Rominagrobis scolded the prisoners, witnesses, society, heaven, earth, and the rats; and then, putting on his black cap, he thundered forth the sentence of death, and condemned these criminal wretches to be hanged and flayed forthwith, with confiscation of property, abolition of memory, and conviction with costs, arrest for debt limited to five years, for one must be humane even to criminals.

The farce played out, the curtain fell.

"How real it is!" exclaimed the Lady of Silver Crowns. "It is cat's justice to the life. Piper or magician, whichever you are, sell me the star chamber."

"Certainly, madam, at the same price," replied Violetta.

"We meet again this evening," answered the marchioness.

"Till this evening," said Violetta; and she added softly, "may you be able to repay me all the harm you have done."

While the farce was being played in the court, the squirrel did not waste his time. By dint of scampering about all over the roofs, he had at last succeeded in finding Perlino, who was eating figs in the garden. From the roof the squirrel had jumped on to a tree, and from the tree on to a bush. Always jumping down, he at length reached the spot where Perlino was standing playing at *morra*¹ with his shadow, the safe way to always win.

The squirrel cut a caper, and, sitting down in front of Perlino with the gravity of a notary,

¹ In the game of *morra* each of the players raises one or more fingers, and his adversary must guess how many fingers he has raised.

"Friend," said he, "solitude has its charms, but you do not look as if you found it very amusing playing here by yourself; let us have a game together."

"Pooh!" said Perlino, yawning, "your fingers are too short, and you are only an animal."

"Short fingers are not always a disadvantage," replied the squirrel; "I have seen more than one man hanged for being too long-fingered; and if I am an animal, Signor Perlino, at least I am a very wide-awake one. That is much better than having intelligence and sleeping like a dormouse. If ever happiness should knock at my door in the night, at least I would be awake to open it."

"Speak clearly," said Perlino, "for the last two days I have felt very strange. My head is heavy, and my heart sad; and I have had bad dreams. Why is that?"

"Look here," said the squirrel, "if you do not drink, you will not sleep: if you do not sleep, you will see something. A word to the wise is sufficient."

Whereupon the squirrel climbed upon a branch and disappeared.

While Perlino had lived in this retreat, he had grown gradually wiser. Nothing makes one wicked like being bored in company, and nothing makes one wise like being bored in solitude. At supper-time, he watched the face and smile of the Lady of Silver Crowns, he was as gay as usual, but every time he was handed the cup of oblivion, he went to the window and admired the beauty of the evening, and each time he threw the dissolved gold into the garden.

CHAPTER X

RECOGNITION

ON entering his chamber, Perlino remarked the piper gazing sadly at him, but he asked no questions, for he was in a hurry to be alone to see if happiness would knock at his door, and in what guise it would enter. His anxiety was not of long duration. He had not lain down on the bed when he heard a gentle plaintive voice. It was Violetta, who in the tenderest language was reminding him

how she had made him and fashioned him with her own hands, and how it was to her prayers that he owed his life; and yet he had allowed himself to be enticed and carried off, while she had run after him so sorely grieved, as it was, happily, the lot of few to know. Violetta told him, too, in the most sorrowful and heartrending accents, how for two nights she had watched at his door, and how to obtain this favour she had given treasures worthy of a king, without getting one word from him; and now, this last night was the end of all her hopes and her life.

On listening to these words, which pierced his heart, Perlino felt as if he had awaked from a dream, as if a cloud was being rent before his eyes. Gently he opened the door and called Violetta, and she threw herself into his arms sobbing. He tried to speak but she would not let him. We always believe those we love, and sometimes one is so happy that one can only weep.

"Let us go away," said Perlino, "let us leave this dreadful place at once."

"It is not so easy to leave, Signor Perlino," replied the squirrel. "The Lady of Silver Crowns does not willingly let anything go that once she has laid hold of. In order to wake you, we have used up all our gifts; now a miracle must be worked to save you."

"Perhaps I have the means," said Perlino, to whom intelligence was coming as sap to a tree in spring-time.

He took the packet which contained the magic powder, and went to the stables, followed by Violetta and her three friends.

There he saddled the best horse, and, walking quietly out, he reached the lodge where the jailer slept with his keys hanging from his waist. At the noise of footsteps the man waked, and was about to call out. As he opened his mouth, Perlino threw into it the dissolved gold, at the risk of suffocating him; but far from complaining the jailer smiled and fell back in his chair, shutting his eyes and stretching out his legs. To seize his bunch of keys, open the gate, double-lock it again, and throw the keys into the moat, so that covetousness might be forever shut up in prison, was

the affair of a few moments to Perlino. The poor fellow had not taken into consideration the hole of the lock, for not more than that is needed for covetousness to escape from its prison and invade the human heart.



Gently Perlino opened the door and called Violetta (P. 122)

At last they were on their road home, both on the same horse, Perlino in front and Violetta behind clinging to him. She had thrown her arm round her beloved one, and pressed him close to her, to make quite sure his heart was

beating. Perlino constantly turned his head to have another look at his dear mistress, and see the smile that he was afraid of forgetting. Farewell, fear and prudence! If the squirrel had not drawn the rein more than once to prevent the horse stumbling or losing himself, who knows when the two travellers would have arrived at their destination?

I leave you to imagine the joy of our worthy Cecco on again finding his daughter and son-in-law. He was the youngest in the house. He laughed all day long without knowing why, and wanted to dance with everybody. He so lost his head that he doubled all his clerk's salaries, and gave a pension to his cashier, who had only served him thirty-six years. Nothing is so blinding as happiness. It was a splendid wedding, but this time they took care to pick their friends. For twenty leagues round bees came who brought a magnificent honeycomb. The ball finished by a tarantella of mice and a saltarello of squirrels which is still spoken of at Pæstum. When the sun went down and the guests left, Perlino and Violetta were still dancing. Nothing could stop them. Cecco, who was wiser, gave them a little sermon, telling them they were no longer children, and that people did not marry to amuse themselves; whereupon they threw themselves into his arms laughing. A father is always soft-hearted, so he took their hands and danced with them himself until evening.

THE THREE LEMONS

(A NEAPOLITAN TALE)



*The wisest senators failed to move
Carlino* (P. 126)

ONCE upon a time there lived a monarch who was called the King of the Tower of Rubies. He had only one son, whom he loved as the apple of his eye, and who was sole heir to the dynasty, which was nearly at an end. To find as a wife for his son a noble princess, possessing beauty and riches, and above all else, a gentle, amiable disposition (notice these two last points), was the one ambition of the old king. Every night he fell asleep thinking of this much desired

marriage, and every night he dreamed he was a grandfather, and in his dreams caressed a troop of little boys, who passed before him with crowns upon their heads and sceptres in their hands.

Unfortunately, together with every virtue which was ever possessed by an heir to a throne, Carlino, for this was the name of the young prince, had one slight defect—he was shyer than a wild colt. At the mere mention of a

woman, he would shake his head and flee into the woods. Of course the king's vexation was very great at seeing his throne without successors and his race on the eve of extinction, and it made him as sad as a traveller shipwrecked within sight of port. He might well despair, for nothing moved Carlino; neither the tears of his father, nor the prayers of the whole nation, nor the good of the country; all failed to touch his flinty heart. The greatest preachers wasted their powers of eloquence in reasoning with him, and the wisest senators failed to move him. Obstinacy is the peculiar privilege of royalty, as Carlino was well aware, and he would have felt ashamed of himself if he had yielded the palm to another.

Sometimes, however, greater events will happen in an hour than at other times in a hundred years. One morning while they were seated at table, the prince, who as usual was being lectured by his father, amused himself with watching the flies which were buzzing around them; and forgetting that he had a knife in his hand, by an impatient movement cut his finger. The blood dropped into a plate of cream which had just been placed before Carlino, whereupon a mad whim seized him.

"Sire," he said to his father, "if I do not soon find a wife whose complexion is as purely red and white as this cream tinged with my blood, I am lost. This wondrous maiden must exist somewhere. I love her; I have completely lost my heart to her, and win her I must. Fortune always favours the brave. If you value my life, permit me to travel in search of the realisation of my dream, otherwise I shall die of longing and *ennui*."

The poor king of the Tower of Rubies was overcome with horror on hearing this mad speech. It seemed to him that his palace was tumbling about his ears. He first turned pale, then red, and finally commenced to weep; at last recovering himself, he exclaimed—

"Oh, my son! prop of my old age, my heart's delight, what has put such an idea into your head? Is your brain turned? Yesterday you were fast making me die of grief by refusing to marry and perpetuate our line, and to-day,

as though to drive me out of the world, you take this wild idea into your head. Where do you wish to go, unhappy boy? Why should you leave your home? You do not know to what perils and hardships a traveller is exposed. Get rid of these dangerous fancies; stay at home, my son, if you do not wish to kill me, and at the same time ruin the kingdom and your family."

This speech had no more effect on Carlino than an official harangue. With abstracted gaze and knit brows, he heeded nothing but his own mad fancy. Everything that was said to him entered in at one ear and went out at the other; and his father's eloquence was entirely thrown away upon him.

When the old king, worn out with fruitless prayers and tears, at last realised that it was easier to melt the weather-cock on the steeple than to persuade a spoiled child bent on having his own way, he sighed deeply and decided to allow his son to depart. After having given him good advice, to which he never listened, and bags of money, which he received a little more graciously, as well as two devoted body servants, the king bade farewell to his rebellious son. He embraced him tenderly, and then with a breaking heart ascended the tower of the castle to gaze as long as possible upon the departing traveller. When Carlino had disappeared from sight, the poor king felt as if his heart was broken; he hid his face in his hands and cried like a child.

While the king was thus grieving, our traveller, mounted on a fine horse, cantered away with waving plumes and a light heart, like Alexander on his way to conquer the world. He traversed mountains and valleys, he visited kingdoms, duchies, counties, baronies, towns, villages, castles, and cottages, looking at every woman and observed by all, even by those who pretended to keep their eyes fixed on the ground. All his search, however, was in vain; all Europe did not contain the treasure he was seeking.

At the end of four months he reached Marseilles, having decided to embark there for India; but at the sight of the sea during a storm his brave and faithful servants were suddenly taken ill. To the great regret of these good men, they felt obliged to take leave of their master and remain

quietly on *terra firma* snugly ensconced between the sheets, while Carlino on board a frail bark defied the winds and waves.

Nothing stands in the way of those who are wholly possessed by a great desire. The prince travelled through Egypt, India, and China, wandering from province to province, from city to city, from house to house, and from hut to hut, seeking everywhere the original of the lovely image engraven on his heart. His labour was thrown away. Though he saw women of every shade of colour—brunette and blonde, chestnut-haired, red-haired, white, yellow, red, and black, he found nowhere the complexion he adored.

Always moving from place to place, and never ceasing from his search, at last Carlino arrived at the world's end, and saw before him nothing but sea and sky. His hopes were crushed, and his dream had vanished. As he was striding along the beach unhappy and disappointed, he espied an old man basking in the sun; so he asked him if there was not any land beyond the waste of waters which stretched away to the horizon.

"No," replied the old man, "nobody has ever discovered anything in this sea, which has neither shores nor islands; at least, those who have ventured to explore it have never come back. I remember, when I was a child, our gray-beards used to say they had heard from their fathers that in that direction, out yonder, far away beyond the horizon, lay the island of the Fates; but woe to the rash mortal who should approach the inexorable sisters, for to see them was to die!"

"What does that matter?" exclaimed Carlino: "to realise my dream I would face anyone."

A boat lay at hand, and into it the prince jumped, and hoisted the sail. The wind, which was blowing freshly, carried the skiff quickly out to sea, the land disappeared, and our hero found himself alone on the ocean. In vain he scanned the horizon, nothing was to be seen but water everywhere. In vain the boat bounded over the foaming waves like a horse proudly shaking its mane. Waves chased waves, and hours succeeded hours. The sun dipped to the horizon, and the silence and solitude round Carlino seemed

to increase, when suddenly he gave a shout as he descried a black spot upon the horizon. At the same moment, the skiff, carried along by the current, shot through the water like an arrow, and grounded on the sand at the foot of some enormous rocks which lifted to the sky their dark crags, worn into sharp pinnacles during the lapse of ages. Fate had cast Carlino on the shore whence none had ever returned.

To scale this wall of rocks was no easy matter. There was neither road nor path, and when, after great exertions, Carlino, bruised, and with bleeding hands, at last reached the top, he found nothing to repay him for his trouble. What he did find was heaped-up ice and black rocks jutting out above the snow, but not a tree or a blade of grass, not a tuft of moss or lichen. It was altogether a scene of winter and of death. Nothing suggested any kind of life, excepting a miserable ruined house, the wooden roof of which was weighted with great stones to resist the violence of the wind. On entering this hut, the prince saw so strange a sight that he was struck dumb with surprise and horror.

At the far end of the apartment was a large piece of tapestry on which was represented every condition of life. Kings, soldiers, labourers, and shepherds were there depicted, and beside them ladies richly dressed, and peasant women with their distaffs. In the foreground boys and girls were dancing gayly, hand in hand. In front of the tapestry the mistress of the house was walking to and fro.

She was an old woman, if the name can be given to a personification of death, or to a living skeleton, whose bones were scarcely concealed under a skin as transparent and yellow as wax. Like a spider about to pounce upon its prey, this old woman, armed with a long pair of scissors, kept closely watching the figures on the tapestry with a cruel eye, then suddenly she would throw herself upon them and snip them up haphazard. Then there would issue from the tapestry a mournful cry, which was enough to curdle the blood of the bravest heart. Tears of children, the heart-rending sobs of mothers, the despair of lovers, the groans of old age, every kind of human sorrow seemed mingled in

that bitter cry. At this wail the old woman burst into a laugh, and her hideous face was lit up with a fierce joy; in the meantime an invisible hand restored the stitches on the canvas, which was constantly being destroyed and as constantly repaired.

The old beldam, reopening her scissors, was again approaching the tapestry, when she perceived Carlino's shadow.

"Make your escape, unhappy man," she cried without turning round. "I know what brings you here, and I cannot help you. Go to my sister; perhaps she will do what you wish. She is Life, and I am Death."

Our traveller did not require to be told twice; he ran straight on, thankful to make his escape from such a scene of horror. Soon the aspect of the country changed, and Carlino found himself in a fertile valley. All around he saw harvests, flowery meadows, vines trailing from tree to tree, and olive-trees laden with fruit. Under the shade of a fig-tree beside a running stream, a blind woman was seated, who was winding round her spindle threads of gold and silk. Near her were arranged distaffs charged with different materials, such as flax, hemp, wool, and silk. When she had finished her task, the Fate stretched out a trembling hand, and taking a distaff at haphazard, began to spin.

Carlino made her a profound bow, and in a voice broken by emotion, strove to tell the story of his pilgrimage; but at the first words she stopped him.

"My son," she said, "I can do nothing for you. I am only a poor blind woman, and do not even know myself what I am doing. This distaff, that I have taken at random, is to decide the fate of all who are born this hour. Their riches or poverty, their happiness or misery depend on these threads which I cannot see. I am the slave of destiny, and can create nothing. Address yourself to my sister, perhaps she will do what you desire. She is Birth, and I am Life."

"I thank you, madam," returned Carlino; and with a light heart he hastened at once to the youngest of the Fates.

He soon found her looking as fresh and lovely as the spring. Round her everything was bursting into life. Corn

was sprouting and stretching up its green shoots along the dark furrows. The orange trees were bursting into blossom, the buds of the forest trees were shedding their red sheaths, while little callow chickens ran hither and thither round their anxious mother, and lambs frisked in the meadow.

This damsel received the prince with extreme graciousness. After listening to him without laughing at his folly, she made him sup with her and at dessert gave him three



The damsel gave Carlino three lemons (P. 131)

lemons and a pretty knife, the handle of which was of mother-of-pearl ornamented with silver.

"Carlino," she said, "you can now return to your father. The prize is gained; you have found what you sought. Now depart, and when you re-enter your kingdom, at the first spring of water you see cut one of the lemons. A fairy will issue from it, who will say to you, 'Give me to drink.' Hand her quickly some water or she will slip through your fingers like quicksilver. If the second escapes

you also, be very careful about the last. Give her immediately some water to drink and you will possess the wife you desire."

Intoxicated with joy, the prince repeatedly kissed the fair hand that was granting him the fulfilment of his dreams. He was more fortunate than he deserved to be, but what of that? Fairies are full of caprice, and fortune herself is a fairy.

It is a long way from the world's end to the kingdom of the Tower of Rubies, and in journeying over lands and seas Carlino faced more than one danger, and encountered many storms; but at last, after a long journey and many hardships, he reached his native country, taking with him the three lemons, which he guarded as his greatest treasures.

He was only two hours distant from the royal residence when he entered a thick wood, where he had more than once enjoyed the pleasures of the chase. A clear spring, bordered with ferns and mosses, and shaded by birch trees, looked very inviting to the weary traveller, so Carlino seated himself on the daisy-enamelled grass, and taking out his knife, cut one of his lemons.

Suddenly there flashed before him a maiden as white as milk, and as red as a strawberry. "Give me to drink," she said.

"How lovely she is!" cried the prince, so enraptured at the sight of such great beauty, that he forgot the advice of the Fate. This was unlucky, for in a second the fairy vision had appeared and disappeared. Carlino was as much astonished as a child who tries to hold water that runs through his fingers. He tried to be calm, and with a hand still trembling cut open the second lemon; but the second apparition was still more beautiful and fleeting than her sister. While Carlino was gazing at her wonderstruck, she was gone in the twinkling of an eye.

This time the prince burst into tears; they flowed so plentifully that he and the spring seemed to become one; he sobbed, he tore his hair, as he exclaimed—

"Am I not sufficiently unhappy? Twice I have let



The Prince handed her quickly some water

them escape, as if my hands were tied. Fool that I am! I deserve my fate. I ought to have run like a hare, and I stood stock still like a blockhead. Here is a nice piece of work! Well, all is not lost yet; but if this knife which the Fate gave me fails me again, I shall be tempted to kill myself!"

Speaking thus, he cut open the last lemon, and the third fairy sprang forth, and said, like her predecessors, "Give me to drink."

But this time the prince handed her quickly some water, and lo, and behold! he held by the hand a lovely slender maiden, white as cream, and with cheeks like a carnation. The world has never seen her equal in beauty or in grace.

Her hair was golden, her eyes were blue, and of a limpid sweetness, which seemed to reveal her very soul, and her rosy lips looked as if they could only open to charm and console. In a word, from head to foot she was the most enchanting creature that had ever fallen from the sky, and it is a pity that her portrait has not been preserved.

The prince lost his head with surprise and joy as he contemplated his future bride. He puzzled himself to think how such a marvel of beauty and goodness could have come out of the bitter rind of a lemon.

"Am I asleep?" he exclaimed; "and is it all a dream? If I am the sport of an illusion, for pity's sake do not wake me."

The fairy's smile, however, soon reassured him; she accepted the hand he offered her, and she it was who first asked to be taken to the good king of the Tower of Rubies, who would be so happy and thankful to give his two children his blessing.

"Dear heart," said Carlino, "I am as anxious as you are to see my father, and to prove to him that I have been successful in my search, but we cannot arrive at the palace arm in arm like two peasants taking a country walk. You must make your first appearance as a princess, and you ought to be received in a manner befitting your high rank.

Wait for me here while I run to the palace, and before two hours are past I shall return to you with attire and equipages that are worthy of you, and attendants whose duty it will henceforth be never to leave you."

Thereupon he raised her hand tenderly to his lips, and left her.

When the maiden found herself alone, she began to be frightened. The croak of a raven, the murmuring of the forest leaves, and a dead branch broken by a gust of wind, all added to her alarm. Trembling, she gazed around, and catching sight of an old oak near the spring, whose hollow trunk offered her shelter, she climbed into it and remained concealed from view, excepting her charming head, which, framed by the leaves, was reflected below in the clear water.

Now there resided in the neighbourhood a lady who every morning sent her slave, a negress, to fetch water from the spring. Chloe, for so the African was called, came that day as usual, carrying a pitcher upon her head; but at the moment of filling it she caught sight of the fairy's reflection in the water. The foolish woman, who had never looked at herself in any mirror, imagined that it was her own reflection, and exclaimed—

"Poor Chloe! To think of such a beautiful creature as you being sent to fetch water like a beast of burden! Never shall you do it more!"

And in her vanity she broke the pitcher and returned home. When her mistress asked how the pitcher had been broken, she answered, shrugging her shoulders—

"The pitcher may often go to the well, but it is broken at last."

Whereupon the lady gave her a little wooden cask, and enjoined her to go at once to the spring and fill it.

The negress ran to the fountain, and gazing fondly at the image in the water, she sighed and said—

"No, I am *not* like a monkey, though they are always telling me so. I am far more beautiful than my mistress. It is for asses to carry casks!" Then taking up the barrel, she threw it with such force to the ground that

it was broken to pieces, and she went back to the house grumbling.

When her mistress, who was waiting for her, inquired what had become of the cask, the slave, in a passion, said—

“A donkey ran up against me, and the cask fell down and was broken.”

At these words her mistress lost patience, and, seizing hold of a broom, she gave the negress a lesson which she



Chloe pricked the bottle through and through (P. 136)

was not likely to forget for a few days; then taking down a leathern bottle from the wall, she said—

“Run, you wretch, and if you do not immediately bring back this bottle full of water, I will make you remember it.”

The negress, frightened, took to her heels and ran once more to the spring. But, when she had filled the leathern bottle, Chloe gazed at the stream, and again seeing the reflection, cried passionately—

"No, I will never be a water-carrier. I am not made to be worked to death like a dog by an angry mistress!"

Saying this, she drew out of her hair the long pin which fastened it, and pricking the bottle through and through, she made it into a watering-pot, whence a thousand jets issued. At this sight the fairy began to laugh in her hiding-place, and the negress looking up, saw the lovely young girl, and understood her mistake.

"Very well," said she, "it was your fault that I was beaten, and you shall pay for it!"

Thereupon in her gentlest voice she asked—

"What are you doing up there, my pretty lady?"

The fairy, who was as good as she was beautiful, sought to comfort the slave by talking to her. Acquaintance was quickly made, for an innocent and unsuspecting heart is always ready to make friends. The fairy confided to the negress all that had happened to the prince and herself, and how she was alone in the wood, and was every minute expecting Carlino to arrive in a grand carriage to conduct his bride to the king of the Tower of Rubies and to marry her in the presence of the whole court.

While the African, who was full of spite and envy, listened to the narrative, a most wicked idea occurred to her.

"Madam," she said, "your husband is approaching with all his suite, and I am sure you wish to look your best. Let me come up beside you and arrange your hair for you, for it is all in disorder."

"You are as welcome as flowers in May," replied the fairy, with a winning smile, and she stretched out her little white hand to the negress, who took it in her two black palms, where it looked like a crystal in an ebony setting.

Scarcely had she climbed up than the wicked slave let down the fairy's hair and began to comb it; then suddenly taking out her own long pin, she plunged it into her companion's brain. On feeling herself wounded, the fairy cried out—

"Ring-dove! ring-dove!"

All at once she turned into a ring-dove and flew away.

Whereupon the horrible negress calmly took the place of her victim, and thrust her black head out of the leafy frame.

In the meantime the prince, mounted upon a magnificent charger, hastened back at full gallop, leaving behind him a long cavalcade. Poor Carlino! He found a crow where he had left a swan. He nearly fainted, and when he tried to speak, tears choked his voice. In vain he looked round on every side, seeking his beloved; at last the negress, putting on the expression of a martyr, said to him, casting her eyes on the ground—

“Your search is vain, prince. A wicked fairy has made me her victim, and a miserable fate has changed your lily into a coal.”

Carlino, like a true prince, would not go back from his word. He gallantly gave his hand to Chloe and helped her to descend from the tree, giving vent the while to such a tempest of sighs that it was enough to have uprooted all the trees in the forest. The African was then attired as became a princess, and was decked with lace and diamonds, which only made her look still blacker than before. Carlino then placed her by his side in a gorgeous glass coach drawn by six white horses, and in this way he returned to the palace with the cheerful feelings of a condemned man who already feels the halter round his neck.

About a league from the castle they met the old king. The marvellous tales of his son had turned his head. In spite of etiquette and chamberlains he was hastening to behold the incomparable beauty of his daughter-in-law. But when, in place of the dove he had been promised, he saw a crow—

“Per baccho!” he cried, “this is a little too much! I knew that my son was mad, but I had not been told that he was blind too. Is this the incomparable lily that he went to the world’s end to find? Is this the rose fresher than the dawn, the miracle of beauty that emerged from a lemon? Can anybody suppose that I will put up with this fresh insult? Do they think that I will leave the empire of the Tower of Rubies, the glorious heritage of my ancestors, to negroes? I will not allow this fright to enter my palace.”

The prince threw himself at his father’s feet and tried

to move him. The prime minister, a man of great experience, represented to his royal master and to the court, that white often became black and *vice versa*, and that there was nothing to be surprised at in such a very natural metamorphosis in the maiden, who would doubtless return on the morrow to her pristine fairness. What could the monarch of the Tower of Rubies say? He was a king and a father, and in consequence was always accustomed to give up his own will to others. So in the end he yielded, and consented unwillingly enough to this singular union. The *Court Gazette* announced to the whole kingdom what a happy choice the prince had made, and enjoined good subjects to rejoice.

The nuptials were not to take place for a week, as it required that length of time to make all the preparations for so grand a ceremony.

The negress was installed in a magnificent suite of apartments, great ladies disputed the honour of putting on her slippers, and duchesses obtained, not without difficulty, the glorious privilege of dressing her. The town and the castle were adorned with flags of every colour, walls were pulled down, avenues were planted, the roads were fresh-gravelled, old compliments were polished up, and old speeches re-furbished. Throughout the kingdom the order went forth that the prince was to be congratulated on having chosen a wife so worthy of him.

The culinary part of the festivities was not overlooked: a hundred and fifty cooks and three hundred scullions set to work under the direction of the famous Bouchibus, the king's *chef*. Sucking pigs were killed, sheep were cut up, capons were larded, pigeons were plucked, turkeys were spitted, and there was a general massacre of the feathered tribe, for no feast was ever complete to which the poultry yard had not largely contributed.

In the midst of all this excitement a beautiful wood-pigeon, with bluish wings, came and perched close by the window of the kitchen. In a soft, plaintive voice it sang, sighing, these words—

“Roocoo, roocoo, roocoo,
What will the prince and the negress do?”

The great Bouchibus was too much occupied with public matters to pay any attention to the cooing of a pigeon, but as it went on, he noticed that the bird spoke, and he determined to announce this marvellous fact to his new mistress. The African did not disdain to visit the kitchen, and as soon



*The next morning Carlino found three lemons already
on the tree (p. 140)*

as she had listened to the bird, she gave orders to the *chef* to catch the pigeon and make it into a pie.

No sooner said than done. The poor bird let itself be caught without making any resistance. In an instant Bouchibus, armed with a big knife, cut off its head and threw it into

the garden. Three drops of blood fell on the ground, and three days later a beautiful little lemon-tree appeared out of the ground, which grew so fast that before night it was in flower.

Now it happened that as the prince was breathing the fresh air on his balcony, this lemon-tree attracted his attention. He could not remember having seen it there before, so he called the cook and asked him who had planted it. Bouchibus's account puzzled Carlino very much, and he commanded, on pain of death, that no one was to touch the lemon tree, and that the greatest care was to be taken of it.

The next morning, on waking, the prince hastened to the garden, where he found three lemons already on the tree, similar to those that the Fate had given him. Carlino gathered them and locked himself into his suite of rooms.

With a trembling hand he poured some water into a gold cup, ornamented with rubies, which had belonged to his mother, and then opened the knife which he always carried about with him.

He cut one lemon, and out came the first fairy, but Carlino scarcely looked at her and she disappeared; the same thing occurred with the second, but as soon as the third one appeared, the prince handed her the cup, out of which she drank, smiling, looking more lovely than ever.

Then the fairy related to the young prince all she had suffered at the hands of the wicked negress, and Carlino, almost out of his mind with mingled fury and happiness, began to shout, and sing, and cry. He made such a noise that the king came hurrying to the apartment. And now it was his turn to go mad; he began to dance, just as he was, with his crown on, and his sceptre in his hand. Then suddenly he stopped and frowned, which was a sign that he was thinking of something, and throwing a veil over his intended daughter-in-law, which covered her from head to foot, he led her by the hand into the dining hall.

It was breakfast-time, and ministers and courtiers were standing at a long table, superbly spread, awaiting the arrival of the king and prince. The king summoned them to him

in turn, and as each approached the fairy, he lifted her veil and inquired—

“What ought to be done to the person who wished to kill this miracle of loveliness?”

Each one, dazzled by the fairy's beauty, gave a different reply. Some said that the perpetrator of such a crime deserved to be hanged; and others wished that a stone should be fastened round his neck, and that he should be thrown into the river. The old prime minister considered that beheading was too good for such a criminal, and voted that he should be burned alive, and all the company applauded him.

When it was the negress's turn she came forward unsuspectingly, for she did not recognize the fairy.

“Sire,” she said to the king, “the monster who could be cruel to this charming person assuredly deserves to be burned alive in a furnace, and to have his ashes scattered to the winds.”

“You have condemned yourself out of your own mouth,” cried the king of the Tower of Rubies. “Wretched woman, behold thy victim, and prepare to die!” Then turning to the officers of his court, he said, “Let a scaffold be erected in the great square in front of the palace. I wish my subjects to have the pleasure of seeing this witch burned.”

“Sire,” said the maiden, taking hold of the king's hand, “your majesty will not refuse me a wedding present?”

“Certainly not, my child,” replied the old king, “ask whatever you like, and even if it is my crown, I will give it to you gladly!”

“Sire,” rejoined the fairy, “grant me then the life of this unhappy woman. She is a wretched and ignorant slave, and life has taught her as yet nothing but hatred and envy. Allow me to make her happy, and to teach her that goodness here below consists in loving.”

“My daughter,” replied the king, “it is easy to see you are a fairy. You do not understand human justice. We do not reform the wicked; we kill them, it is altogether a quicker process; but, however, I have pledged my word. Tame the viper at your own risk. I will not oppose your wishes.”

The fairy raised the negress, who was kissing her hand and weeping. All then sat down to table. The king was so happy that he ate enough to satisfy four ordinary men; as to Carlino, who never took his eyes off his bride, he cut his thumb half a dozen times, owing to sheer absence of mind.

When the good king died, at a ripe old age, Carlino and his gentle wife ascended the throne, and, during a reign of half a century (if we may believe history), they never once increased the taxes, or caused a single tear to be shed, or one drop of blood. More than a thousand years afterwards the people of the Tower of Rubies would sigh when they talked of that bygone age, and it was not only the children in that kingdom who longed for the return of the good old times when fairies reigned.

THE TAILOR'S STORY

ONCE upon a time there was a tailor who had a very beautiful daughter. All the young men sought her on account of her beauty. Two rivals came to her and said—

“It is for your sake we have come here.”

“What do you want?” she answered, smiling.

“We love you,” replied the two young men, “and each of us wishes to marry you.”

Being as well brought up as she was pretty, she then called her father, who listened to the two suitors, and said to them—

“It is getting late. Go away now, and come back tomorrow, and you shall then know which of you two my daughter has chosen.”

The next morning at daybreak the two young fellows returned.

“Here we are,” they cried to the tailor. “You remember what you promised us yesterday.”

“Wait,” he answered. “I am going to the market to buy some cloth; when I bring it back with me, you shall hear what I require of you.”

When the tailor returned from market he called his daughter, and when she had come, he turned to the young men—

“My sons, there are two of you, and I have but one daughter. To whom must I give her? to whom must I refuse her? Look at this piece of cloth, I will cut it out for two similar garments; each of you shall sew one, and he who first finishes his work shall be my son-in-law.”

Each of the two rivals took his appointed task, and

prepared to work under his master's eye. The father called his daughter and said—

“Here is some thread which you will prepare for the two workers.”

The girl obeyed her father, took the ball of thread and seated herself near the young men.

Now the maiden was clever; her father did not know which she loved, neither did the young men, but she herself



For the one she loved the maiden gave short needlefuls

(P. 144)

knew perfectly. The tailor went out, and she prepared the thread while the young men took their needles and began sewing. But for the one she loved, she gave short needlefuls, while she gave long needlefuls to the one she did not love. Each sewed away with the greatest ardour. At eleven o'clock the work was scarcely half done, but at three in the afternoon the young man who had had short needlefuls had accomplished his task, while the other was a long way from finishing his.

When the tailor came back, the victor brought him the finished garment, while his rival was still sewing.

"My sons," said the father, "I did not wish to favour either of you, and that is why I divided this piece of cloth into equal portions, and I told you, 'He who shall have finished first shall be my son-in-law.' Did you understand me?"

"Father," replied both the young men, "we quite understood what you said, and accepted the test. What is done is well done."

The tailor reasoned thus: "He who finishes first is the cleverest workman, consequently he will best sustain the credit of my establishment." He had not guessed that his daughter would give long needlefuls to the one she would not have. It was her wit which decided the result, so it was the maiden herself who chose her own husband.

FATE

ONCE upon a time there were two brothers who kept house together. One did all the work, while the other was lazy and thought of nothing but eating and drinking. Their harvests were invariably splendid, and they owned a great number of cattle, horses, sheep, and pigs.

The elder, who did all the work, said to himself one day, "Why should I work for that lazy fellow? It were better for us to separate. I will work for myself alone, and he can do as he likes." So he said to his brother—

"Brother, it is not fair that I should do all the work while you never put out a finger to help, and think of nothing but eating and drinking. We must separate."

"Do not do that, brother. We are so comfortable as we are. You have the ordering of everything, and everything that is yours is mine, and you know I am always satisfied with whatever you do and whatever you order."

But the elder adhered to his resolution, so his younger brother gave way, saying—

"Since it must be so, I do not wish to show you any ill-will. Divide the property as you like."

The division was made, and each of them chose his share. The lazy one took a herdsman for his cattle, a shepherd for his sheep, a goatherd for his goats, a swineherd for his pigs, and somebody to look after his bees, and then said to them—

"I trust all my property to you. Heaven watch over you."

And he went on living in his house as before, without troubling himself further.

The elder, on the contrary, wore himself out over his share of the property, as much as he had formerly done over the whole property, for he herded his flock and herds himself, keeping his eye on everything. Notwithstanding this he met with losses and misfortunes. Day after day everything turned out badly with him, until at last he became so poor that he had not even a pair of shoes. He had to go barefoot. Then he said—

“I will go to my brother and see how things are prospering with him.”

His road led him through a meadow where a flock of sheep were grazing, and as he drew near, he remarked that there was no shepherd; but seated near was a beautiful young girl, who was spinning some gold thread on her distaff.

After greeting the maiden, he asked her to whom the flock belonged, and she answered—

“These sheep belong to the same person to whom I belong.”

“And who art thou?” he continued.

“I am thy brother’s fortune,” she replied.

Whereupon he was seized with anger and envy, and exclaimed—

“And my fortune—mine; where is she?”

The maiden replied—“Ah, she is a long way off from thee.”

“Can I find her?” he asked.

And she answered, “Thou canst, only thou must seek her.”

When he heard these words, and saw his brother’s sheep looking so well to do, finer animals it was impossible to imagine, he did not wish to go further and inspect the other flocks and herds, but went straight to his brother. As soon as the latter saw him, he was sorry for him, and melting into tears said—

“Where have you been all this long time?”

And seeing him barefooted, and in rags, he gave him a pair of shoes and some money.

After resting three days at his brother’s house the poor man returned home, but immediately on his arrival there

he shouldered a knapsack, put in it a piece of bread, and with a stick in his hand started off to seek his fortune in the world.

After walking some time he found himself in a great forest, where he suddenly came upon an ugly old woman asleep under a bush. He began poking in the earth with his stick, and then to wake the old woman he struck her on the back. Nevertheless she scarcely stirred, and only half opening her bleary eyes she said—

“Be thankful that I was asleep, for if I had been awake you would not have had those shoes.”

Whereupon he said, “Who art thou, who could have prevented my having these shoes.”

The old woman answered, “I am thy fortune.”

On hearing these words he struck his breast and cried—
“How, thou art my fortune! Curse thee! Who gave thee to me?”

And the old woman replied, “Fate.”

“Where does Fate dwell?” he inquired.

“Go and discover for thyself,” she replied, slumbering once more.

So he set off in search of Fate. After travelling a long, long time he came to a wood, and in this wood he found a hermit, of whom he inquired if he could give him any news of Fate. The hermit replied—

“Ascend that mountain and you will arrive at his castle, but when you have met with Fate I advise you not to speak with him; only do the same as he does until he addresses you.”

The traveller thanked the hermit and took the road to the mountain. When he reached the Castle of Fate he saw many beautiful things. What royal magnificence abounded there, and what a crowd of lackeys and servants were there, who were always moving here and there but did nothing! Fate himself was seated at table at supper. When the newcomer saw this he too placed himself at table and joined the master of the house at his meal. After supper Fate retired to rest, and his guest followed his example. Towards midnight there was a tremendous uproar in the

castle, and in the midst of the uproar a voice was heard crying—

“Fate, Fate, so many, many souls have been born to-day, give them something at thy will and pleasure!”



Fate scattered the money on the ground (P. 151)

So Fate rose up, opened a gilt coffer, and scattered shining ducats about the apartment, saying as he did so—

“Such as I am to-day, such you will be all your life!”

At daybreak the fine castle disappeared, and in its

place stood an ordinary house, but everything in it was on a very comfortable scale. When evening came Fate seated himself again at the supper table, and his guest did the same. Neither of them spoke a word, and after supper both went to bed.

Toward midnight the dreadful uproar was again heard, and in the midst of the noise a voice cried—

“Fate, Fate, many souls have seen the light to-day, give them something at thy will and pleasure!”

So Fate rose up, opened a silver coffer, but this time there were no ducats, but only silver pieces, mixed here and there with a few gold ones. Fate scattered the money on the ground saying—

“Such as I am to-day, such shall you be all your life!”

At daybreak the house had disappeared, and in its place stood another smaller one. Each night passed in the same manner, and each morning the house grew smaller and smaller, until at last there was only a miserable hut. Fate took a spade and set to work to dig the ground, while his guest did the same, and they dug all day. When evening came Fate took a crust of dry bread, broke it in half and gave the half to his companion. This was all their supper, and after they had eaten they retired to rest.

Toward night a terrible noise was heard, and in the midst of the noise a voice could be distinguished saying—

“Fate, Fate, so many souls have been born into the world to-night, give them something at thy will and pleasure.”

Whereupon Fate rose, opened a coffer, and began scattering some stones, and among them a few little coins, saying as he did so—

“Such as I am to-day, such shall you be all your life.”

When morning again broke the hut was changed into a great palace like on the first day. Then for the first time Fate addressed his guest and said—

“Why did you come?”

Our traveller told him at full length all his misfortunes, and how he had come to ask Fate himself why he had allotted him such bad fortune, and Fate replied—

“You saw the first night how I scattered ducats, and what followed. What I am the night a man is born such will that man be all his life. You were born in a night of poverty, so you will be poor all your life. Your brother, on the contrary, was born on a lucky night, and he will be lucky to the end. But since you have taken so much trouble in seeking me I will tell you how you can do the best for yourself. Your brother has a daughter named Miliza who is as fortunate as her father. Marry her when you return home, but be careful to say everything that you become possessed of is your wife’s.”

The guest thanked Fate warmly, and took his leave. On his return home he went straight to his brother and said—

“Brother, give me Miliza for wife. You see that without her I am alone in the world.”

And his brother answered—

“I shall be delighted. Miliza is yours.”

The bridegroom led home the maiden and became very rich, but he always said—

“All that I have is Miliza’s.”

One day as he was going to the fields to see how his corn was growing, it was as fine as he could wish to see it, a traveller passed and inquired—

“To whom do these corn-fields belong?”

And without thinking he answered, “To me.”

But scarcely were the words out of his mouth before the corn caught fire and the field was all in a blaze. Quickly he ran after the traveller and cried—

“Stop, friend, this corn does not belong to me, but to Miliza, my wife.”

The fire ceased instantly, and since then our hero has been lucky, thanks to Miliza.

THE IDLE MAIDEN

ONCE upon a time there was a mother who had an exceedingly idle little daughter, who had no taste for any sort of work. She led her into a wood near a cross-road, and there beat her with all her might. A nobleman, who by chance was passing by at the time, asked the mother the reason of this severe punishment.

"My dear sir," she replied, "my daughter is perfectly unendurable; she would spin even the moss on the stones."

"Trust her to me," said the nobleman, "and I will give her hemp to spin to her heart's content."

"Take her," said the mother, "take her; I do not want anything more to do with her."

And the nobleman led her away to his house, delighted with his beautiful acquisition.

The same evening he shut up the maiden all alone in a room where there was a great basket full of hemp. This troubled her very much.

"What shall I do?" she cried. "I will not spin! I do not know how to spin!"

But as night drew on, three old witches rapped at the window, and the maiden bade them come in quickly.

"If you will invite us to your wedding," they said to her, "we will help you to spin this evening."

"Spin away, dames," she quickly replied, "I invite you to my marriage."

And thereupon the three witches spun and spun all there was in the basket, while the idle maid slept peacefully.

In the morning, when the master entered the apartment, he saw the walls hung round with thread, and the maiden



*The three witches spun and spun all there was
in the basket (P. 152)*

fast asleep. So he went out again very softly and forbade anybody to enter the room, in order that the spinner might rest after such severe labour. This did not prevent him having a second basket full of hemp brought in the same day, but the witches came at the appointed hour and everything took place as on the previous day.

The nobleman was overpowered with astonishment, and as he had nothing more to spin in the house, he said to the maiden—

“I wish to marry you, for you are the queen of spinners.”

The eve of the wedding the pretended spinner said to her betrothed—

“I must invite my aunts to my marriage.”

And the nobleman replied that they would be very welcome.

When they arrived, the three witches seated themselves round the stove. They were hideous, and when the bridegroom caught sight of their frightful countenances, he said to his betrothed—

“Your aunts are not beautiful.”

Then approaching the first one, he asked her why her nose was so long.

“My dear nephew,” she answered, “it is because I am always spinning. When one spins and moves one’s head all day, insensibly one’s nose lengthens.”

The gentleman passed on to the second witch, and asked her why she had such thick lips.

“My dear nephew,” she replied, “it is from spinning. When one is always spinning, and all day long moistening one’s thread, insensibly one’s lips thicken.”

Then he asked the third why she was humpbacked.

“My dear nephew,” she said, “it is from spinning. When one stoops all day long, gradually the back grows crooked.”

Then the nobleman was very much afraid lest his wife from overmuch of spinning should grow as hideous as her three aunts, so he threw her distaff and spinning wheel into the fire. Let those who are like the idle maiden guess if she was sorry.

My story is ended.

THE MAIDEN WHO WAS WISER THAN AN EMPEROR

ONCE upon a time, there was a poor man who lived in a hut. He had but one child, a daughter, but she was very wise. She used to beg for alms everywhere, and taught her father to speak wisely and so obtain what he wanted. One day it happened that the poor man went to the emperor and begged him to give him something.

The emperor, surprised at the beggar's manner of speech, inquired of him who he was, and who had taught him to express himself so well.

"My daughter taught me," he answered.

"And who taught your daughter?" asked the emperor; to which the poor man replied—

"It was God and our extreme penury that taught her."

Then the emperor gave him thirty eggs and said—

"Take these eggs to your daughter, and tell her that she is to hatch me the chickens, and if she does not succeed in hatching them, she will suffer for it."

The poor man returned weeping to his hut and told his daughter all. The maiden saw at once that the eggs had been boiled, but she told her father to go and lie down; she would manage everything. Her father followed her advice and went to bed. She, meanwhile, taking a saucepan, filled it with water and beans, and put it on the fire.

The next morning, when the beans were boiled, she called her father and told him to take the oxen and plough, and then sow the beans, and to say aloud, "Come on, oxen, may the Lord protect me and make my boiled beans grow!"

“And if the emperor asks you how it is possible to make boiled beans grow, answer that it is as easy as to make a chicken come out of a boiled egg.”

The poor man did as his daughter said; he went out and ploughed, and when he saw the emperor, he began crying—

“Come, my oxen, and may the Lord protect me, and make my boiled beans grow!”

As soon as the emperor heard these words, he stopped on the road and said—

“Poor fool, how is it possible to make boiled beans grow?”

And the poor man replied—

“Gracious emperor, it is as easy as to make a chicken come out of a boiled egg.”

The emperor guessed that it was the daughter who had put her father up to this, and he told his attendants to take the poor man and bring him to him; then giving him a small packet of hemp he said—

“Take this and make out of it sails, ropes, and everything that is wanted for a ship. If you do not I will cut off your head.”

The poor man, in great trouble, took the parcel, and returned in tears to his daughter, to whom he related all that had passed. His daughter told him to go to sleep, promising that she would manage everything. Next day she took a small piece of wood, and, waking her father, said—

“Take this match to the emperor, and tell him to make me a spindle, a shuttle, and a loom out of it, and after that I will do what he said.”

The poor man once more followed his daughter’s advice; he went to the emperor, and repeated what she had told him.

When the emperor heard it, he was astonished, and racked his brain to think what he should do next; then taking a drinking glass, he gave it to the man saying—

“Take this glass to your daughter, and tell her to empty the sea and make it arable land.”

The poor man obeyed weeping, and carried the glass to his daughter, repeating word for word what the emperor said. The maiden told him to wait till the next day, and she would manage it all. The following morning she called her father and gave him a pound of tow, and said—

“Take this to the emperor for him to stop up all the springs and mouths of all the rivers on the globe, and after that I will dry up the sea.”

So the poor man went and repeated this to the emperor, who, seeing that the maiden knew more than he did, gave orders for her to be brought to him. When the father had fetched his daughter, and both had made obeisance to the emperor, the latter said—

“My daughter, tell me what is heard from furthest off?”

The maiden replied—

“Gracious emperor, the thunder and a lie is what is heard from furthest.”

Then the emperor, taking hold of his beard, and turning to his ministers, said—

“Tell me what my beard is worth?”

And when they had all estimated it, some more, some less, the maiden maintained that none of them had guessed rightly, and went on to say—

“The emperor's beard is worth three showers in a dry summer.”

The emperor was enchanted at this and said—

“She has rightly guessed.”

And he asked her if she would be his wife, adding that he would not let her go until she consented.

The maiden courtesied and replied—

“Gracious emperor, let it be as you wish. I only ask you to write on a piece of paper with your own hand that if one of these days you grow unkind and wish to get rid of me and send me away from the palace, I am to have the right to take with me whatever I love best.”

The emperor agreed, and gave her a document sealed with red wax and stamped with the great seal.

After some time, it came indeed to pass that the emperor grew unkind to his wife and said to her—

“I no longer wish you for wife. Leave my palace and go where you will!”

And the empress replied: “Illustrious emperor, I obey; only permit me to pass one more night here and to-morrow I will go.”



The emperor asked her if she would be his wife (P. 158)

The emperor granted her request, whereupon the empress before supper mixed some brandy and scented herbs with the wine, then pressing the emperor to drink, she said—

“Drink, my friend, and be merry. To-morrow we shall part, and, believe me, I shall be happier than the day I married you.”

The emperor had no sooner drunk the wine than he fell asleep; whereupon the empress had him placed in a carriage which was in readiness, and carried him off in it to a grotto hewn out of a rock. When the emperor awoke and saw where he was, he cried—

“Who has brought me here?”

To which the empress answered—

“It was I who brought you.”

And the emperor said: “Why have you done that? Have I not told you that you are no longer my wife?”

Then she handed him the document, saying—

“It is true you said that, but see what you promised me in this writing. On leaving you I was to have the right to take away with me whatever I loved best in your palace.”

When the emperor heard that, he embraced her, and they returned together to the palace, never more to part.

THE LANGUAGE OF ANIMALS

ONCE upon a time, there was a shepherd who had served his master most zealously and faithfully for many years. One day, as he was tending his sheep, he heard a hissing sound issuing from a wood close by, and not knowing what it could be, he entered the forest, following the direction whence the sound came, to find out the reason of it. As he drew near, he saw that the dry grass and fallen leaves had caught fire, and in the midst of the circle of flames he espied a snake which was hissing loudly. The shepherd stopped to see what the snake would do, for the creature was completely surrounded by flames, which were drawing closer and closer to it. As soon as the snake caught sight of the shepherd, it cried out—

“For heaven’s sake, shepherd, save me from the fire!”

The shepherd stretched out his crook over the flames, and the snake, twining itself round the stick, climbed up to the shepherd’s hand; from his hand it slipped up to his neck, and wound itself round him like a necklace. When the shepherd saw this he was terrified, and said to the snake—

“Bad luck to me! Have I saved you to my own destruction?”

The creature answered: “Fear nothing, but carry me back to my father the snake-king.”

Whereupon the shepherd began to excuse himself on the score of not being able to leave his sheep, but the snake said—

“Do not disturb yourself about your flock; no harm will happen to them. Only go as fast as you can.”

So the shepherd set off running through the wood with

the snake round his neck, until he arrived at a gate which was formed of adders intertwined. The snake hissed, and immediately the adders separated themselves, and then it said to the shepherd—

“When we get to the castle my father will offer you everything that you could possibly desire—silver, gold, jewels, and everything in the world that is precious—but accept nothing; ask him to make you able to understand the language of animals. He will refuse you this favour for a long time, but in the end he will grant it.”

While it was speaking, they reached the castle, and the snake's father said, weeping—

“In Heaven's name, my child, where have you been?”

The snake related to him how it had been surrounded by fire, and how the shepherd had saved it. The snake-king, then turning to the shepherd, said—

“What do you wish me to give you for having saved my child's life?”

“Teach me the language of animals,” replied the shepherd. “I wish to be able to talk, like you, with every creature on the earth.”

The king said: “That will be worth nothing to you, for if I grant you the gift of understanding this language, and you retail this to anyone, you will be a dead man on the spot. Ask me some other thing which will be more useful to you, and I will give it to you.”

But the shepherd answered: “If you wish to pay me, teach me the language of animals; if not, farewell, and may heaven protect you. I wish for nothing else.”

And he made as though he would leave them. Then the king called him back saying—

“Stop, and come here, since you insist upon it. Open your mouth.”

The shepherd opened his mouth, and the snake-king blew into it and said:

“Now blow in your turn into mine.”

When the shepherd had done what he was told, the snake-king blew a second time into his mouth. And when they had each blown at the other three times, the king said—

“Now you understand the language of animals; but if you wish to live, beware of betraying this secret, for if you breathe a word of it to anyone you are a dead man.”

The shepherd then returned, and as he passed through the woods he understood all that the birds said, and the grass said, and the language of all creation. On coming back to his flock he found it all safe and sound, so he stretched himself on the ground to go to sleep. Scarcely had he lain



The shepherd stretched out his crook over the flames (P. 161)

down when two crows came and perched on a tree near, and said in their language—

“If this shepherd only knew that there, where the black lamb is, there lies a cellar underground full of gold and silver!”

Directly the shepherd heard that, he went to seek his master, and together they took a cart, and then, digging in the place indicated, they found the door of the cellar and carried off the treasure.

The master was a worthy man, and he left it all to the shepherd, saying—

“My son, the treasure is yours, for God has given it to you.”

The shepherd took the treasure, built a house, and marrying shortly after, he lived contented and happy. He was soon the richest man, not only of the village, but of the whole neighbourhood. For ten leagues round there was not another to compare with him. He had flocks and herds and horses; every herd had its herdsman; he had besides a great deal of land and great riches.

One day, it being Christmas Eve, he said to his wife, “Prepare wine and brandy and all that is necessary, for tomorrow we will go to the farm, and we will carry it to the shepherds so that they may make holiday.”

His wife obeyed the order, and prepared all as she had been told. The next evening, when they were at the farm, the master said to the shepherds—

“My friends, enjoy yourselves, eat, drink, and be merry. I will watch this night and take care of the flocks and herds in your place.”

He did what he had said, and watched the flocks. When midnight came, the wolves began to howl and the dogs to bark; the wolves were saying in their language—

“Let us come and do some mischief; there will be some meat for you too.”

And the dogs answered in their language, “Come, we want a good meal once in a way.”

But among the dogs there was an old bull-dog who had but two fangs left in his mouth, and he said to the wolves—

“As long as I have two fangs left in my mouth you shall not do my master any harm.”

The master had heard and understood all this talking; so when morning came he gave orders for all the dogs to be killed with the sole exception of the old bull-dog.

Much astonished, his servants said, “Master, it is a great pity,” but he answered, “Do as I tell you.”

He then made ready to return home with his wife,

and both set off, the husband mounted on a fine grey horse, his wife seated on an ambling nag which was completely covered by the long folds of her gown. As they went along, it happened that the husband was in front and his wife behind. His horse turned round and said to the mare—

“Come on, quick! Why are you so slow?”

The mare answered, “Oh yes, that is easy enough for you who have only the master to carry, but as for me, along with my mistress, I carry necklaces and bracelets, skirts and petticoats, keys, and any number of bags. It would require four oxen to draw all this woman’s paraphernalia comfortably.”

The master turned back laughing, and his wife, seeing this, pushed on her nag, and, on joining her husband, inquired of him why he had laughed.

“Oh, for nothing; an idea merely passed through my mind.”

His wife did not approve of this answer, and she pressed her husband to tell her why he had laughed. But he would not, and said—

“Leave me in peace, woman, what is it to you? Good heavens! I do not even know myself why I laughed.”

The more he defended himself, the more she insisted on knowing the reason why he laughed. At last he said—

“Well, know then, that if I tell you what made me laugh, I should die the same instant.”

But that had no effect upon his wife; she teased her husband more than ever to speak.

At length they reached home; and on dismounting, the husband gave orders for a bier to be made. When it was ready, he placed it in front of the house, and said to his wife—

“Look, I am going to get inside this coffin, and I will then tell you what made me laugh; but directly I have spoken I shall be a dead man.”

He then placed himself in the coffin, and as he was gazing for the last time around him the bull-dog approached his master weeping. When the poor man saw him, he called his wife and said—

"Bring a piece of bread and give it to the poor old fellow."

The woman brought a piece of bread to the dog, but he did not even look at it; whereupon the cock of the house ran up and pecked at the bread, and the dog said—

"Greedy wretch, can you eat when you see the master is going to die?"

"Let him die!" answered the cock, "since he is silly enough to do so. I have a hundred wives: I call them all when I find the smallest grain, and as soon as they come I eat it myself. If one of them dared to think this a shame, I should chastise it with my beak; and as for the master, who has only one wife, he has not the wit to bring her to reason."

Directly the husband heard this, he sprang out of the bier, took a stick in his hand, and called his wife into the room.

"Come, and I will tell you what you so much want to know."

He then answered her with a stick, saying, "Take that, and that, wife!"

In this way she had her answer, and never since has the wife asked her husband why he laughed.

YVON AND FINETTE

CHAPTER I

ONCE upon a time there lived a great and powerful nobleman, in Brittany, whose name was the Baron de Clairvaux, and whose estates were the finest in the whole province. His castle was built in the Gothic style, and the delicate tracery observable in its architecture had the appearance, at a little distance, of fine lace-work. The windows on the first-floor opened on to a wide balcony, and were of stained glass, each representing some historical subject. Six of these windows looked to the east and six to the west, and every morning before the Baron rode off to the forest on his bay mare, followed by his beautiful greyhounds, he waved farewell to his six daughters, as they stood at the east windows. They looked like six Madonnas in their niches, with their beautiful blue eyes, their golden hair floating, and their lily hands joined in prayer for the welfare of the house of Clairvaux. In the evening, when the Baron returned home, after making the tour of his property, his six sons were standing at the west windows, watching for his return. They looked like six knights sculptured on some cathedral door, with their chestnut locks and noble mien—the pride and glory of the house of Clairvaux. The castle had twelve windows, but the Baron had thirteen children. The youngest was a handsome stripling of sixteen, by name Yvon. He was, as is often the case with the youngest, his father's favourite. In the morning, when the Baron left the castle, Yvon accompanied him to the door to bid him adieu; and in the evening was there again to welcome him home. With his flaxen hair falling in rich luxuriance over his shoulders, his slight figure, roguish air, and independent

bearing, he was the idol of the Bretons. At the age of twelve he killed a wolf, which act of prowess gained for him the title of "Sans Peur," a name he well deserved, for a braver heart than his never beat. One day, contrary to his usual custom, the Baron remained at home. He was engaged in fencing with his squire, when Yvon entered the gallery equipped for travelling, and kneeling upon one knee addressed his father as follows:

"Father, I come to ask your blessing ere I depart, for I am going on a long journey. The house of Clairvaux is rich in knights, and well supplied with sons; I shall, therefore, not be missed. So I am going abroad to carve out my own fortune and to make my name famous."

"I approve of thy resolution, my son," replied the Baron, who was more moved than he cared to show; "far be it from me to keep thee back—indeed, I have no right to do so—but thou art somewhat young Yvon, were it not better to wait another year?"

"I am sixteen, father, and at that age you had already measured swords with the Duc de Rohan; I have not forgotten that the arms of our family are a lion fighting with a unicorn, and that our motto is 'Forward!' The house of Clairvaux shall not have reason to blush for its youngest scion."

Whereupon Yvon received his father's blessing, shook his brothers by the hand, kissed his sisters, bid adieu to the weeping vassals, and took his departure with a light heart. No obstacle seemed to daunt him upon his journey; he swam across wide rivers, scaled high mountains, and plunged through dense forests, always pursuing his journey westward. Whenever any difficulty occurred, he cried "Forward!" and by dint of his indomitable will he succeeded in surmounting each in turn. Three years passed, during which period he had wandered all over the world in search of adventures. Sometimes he succeeded, and sometimes he failed; but his courage and good temper never forsook him. At length he was asked to organize a crusade against the Norwegians. To exterminate the heathen, and at the same time to conquer a kingdom, was a double temptation. He immediately



“Who art thou, and what dost thou want?” said the giant!

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enrolled twelve knights into his service, freighted a small vessel, ran up a standard to the mast bearing the device and motto of the Clairvaux upon an azure ground, and set sail. The sea was calm, the wind favourable, and the night fine. Yvon lay upon the deck, watching the stars, and wondering which of the countless planets was shedding its pale beams over his home, when all of a sudden the vessel struck upon a rock with an awful crash, the masts were carried away like rotten timber, and a huge wave washed right over the deck, sweeping everything before it.

"Forward!" cried Yvon, the moment his head appeared above water, and he began swimming as coolly and collectedly as if he were bathing in the castle moat at home. Fortunately the moon rose at that juncture, and by the help of her light Yvon discovered a dark object at a little distance rising out of the silvery expanse of waters. It was land! He made for it at once, and at last, with some difficulty, succeeded in reaching the shore. Dripping wet, exhausted, and out of breath, he dragged himself along the beach, and not feeling equal to any further efforts, said his prayers, and fell asleep.

CHAPTER II

ON awakening the next morning, our hero thought he would explore the strange country in which he had been thrown by fate. The first object he saw was a building as large as a cathedral, with windows fifty feet high. After walking for one whole day, he found himself before an enormous door, the knocker of which was much too heavy for any ordinary person to lift. Picking up a big stone, he knocked on the door with it. "Enter!" roared a voice from within; at the same instant the door flew open, and Yvon found himself face to face with a giant forty feet high.

"Who art thou, and what dost thou want?" said the giant, lifting Yvon off the ground by the collar, in order to examine him more closely.

"My name is 'Sans Peur,' and I wish to make my fortune," replied his visitor, defiantly.

"Bravo, valiant 'Sans Peur,'" said the giant, in a mocking tone; "thy fortune is made then, for I am in want of a servant; enter my service, and thou shalt begin thy duties at once. I am about to lead my flocks and herds out to pasture; in my absence do thou clean out the stable; more than this I do not require thee to do. So thou seest I am a good master," he added with a chuckle. "Do thy duty, and above all, do not enter the house, on peril of thy life."

"He certainly is a good master, for the work is light enough," thought Yvon, when the giant was gone. "There is plenty of time to sweep out the stable in. What can I do in the meantime to amuse myself? I think I shall go and have a look at the house. He told me I was not to go in, so it is sure to be worth seeing." So saying, he walked boldly in. In the first room there was a huge fireplace, before which a cauldron was hanging to a hook, but there was no fire in the grate.

"What does this mean?" thought Yvon. "It is most mysterious!" and cutting off a lock of his hair, he dipped it into the cauldron. Lo, and behold! on drawing it out, he found it covered with copper. "Ho, ho!" cried he, "this is a new kind of soup; I should be afraid of having a coating of armour inside me if I drank this stuff."

He then went into the second room, where he saw another cauldron hanging before an empty grate. Yvon dipped a lock of hair into this one also, and when he drew it out it was covered with silver.

"At home," said he to himself, "our soups are not so rich, but I back them to have a better flavour." Saying which, he walked into the third room, and there he saw another cauldron boiling away without any fire. Yvon dipped a lock of hair into it, and what was his surprise to find, upon drawing it out, that it was covered with gold! "This beats all," cried he. "We have a Breton proverb, which says, 'From bad to worse,' but here it is always better and better. I wonder what I shall find in the fourth room. A diamond soup, I suppose!" As he spoke he pushed the door open, and a sight met his eyes which was much more wonderful than the precious stones he had expected. A

maiden of such transcendent loveliness, that he was quite dazzled, and he involuntarily threw himself upon his knees before her.

"Unhappy boy!" exclaimed she, "what are you doing here?"

"I am a servant of the house," replied Yvon; "the giant engaged me this morning."

"Engaged you!" repeated the girl; "then may Heaven deliver you from such a service as soon as possible."

"Why?" said Yvon. "He is a good master, and my work could not be lighter. I have only got to sweep out the stable, and do what I like for the rest of the day."

"And how are you going to sweep it?" she asked. "If you do as your predecessors did, you will find ten heaps of rubbish come in at the window for every one you sweep out of the door. But I will tell you what to do. Turn the pitchfork round and sweep with the handle, and you will find that your work will be done at a single stroke."

"I shall certainly follow your advice, and thank you,"

"Ho, ho!" cried Yvon, "this is a new kind of soup."

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said Yvon, seating himself, and entering into conversation with the fair stranger, who, I must tell you, was a fairy's daughter, and a slave of the giant. It does not take long for two people to become acquainted who are companions in misfortune; and before the end of the day Finette, for such was the maiden's name, had promised to marry Yvon, provided they should both succeed in escaping from their odious master. The difficulty was how to manage it. Time flies in agreeable conversation such as theirs, and evening



was drawing on, when Finette had to remind her new friend of his duties, which had to be accomplished before the giant's return.

Taking up the pitchfork, Yvon thought that he would use it as he had seen it used in the stables at home, but he soon had enough of it, for Finette's prophecy came true, and the poor boy was nearly suffocated. He then bethought himself of Finette's instructions, and turning the pitchfork round, began sweeping with the handle. In a twinkling the stable was as clean as if no horse had ever entered it. His work done, Yvon seated himself in the porch and waited for the giant's return. As soon as he came in sight, Yvon threw back his head, began flourishing his legs wildly about, and hummed a Breton melody.

"Hast cleaned out the stable?" asked the giant, frowning.

"Yes, master," replied Yvon, without rising.

"We shall soon see that," roared the giant, as he entered the stable, grumbling. Contrary to his expectation, he found it perfectly clean, and he rushed out in a towering rage. "You have seen my Finette!" he cried; "you would not have found out how to do it without her help."

"What is Myfinette?" said Yvon, opening his mouth, and half closing his eyes in an idiotic manner. "Is it an animal? Do show it to me."

"Hold thy tongue, fool!" answered the giant; "thou shalt see her soon enough."

The next day the giant called Yvon before taking his sheep out to pasture, and told him to fetch his horse home, which was grazing on the mountain side. After which, he told him, with a chuckle, he might amuse himself. "Thou seest that I am a good master. Do thy duty, and do not go into the house, or I will cut off thy head."

Yvon winked knowingly as the giant moved away. "I have got a good master and no mistake; he is very harmless; but I am going into the house, whatever he says, and have another talk with Finette. I should like to know which she belongs to most—to him or to me?"

So saying, he went into the house, and straight up to the room occupied by Finette. "Hurrah!" cried he, as he

entered; "I have nothing to do to-day but fetch his horse home from the mountain."

"Indeed," said Finette, "and may I ask how you intend to do it?"

"What do you mean by asking such a question?" said Yvon. "Where is the difficulty of catching a horse and bringing him home? I have ridden worse animals than that, I can tell you."

"It is not as easy as you think," replied Finette; "but I will tell you what you must do. When you get near the horse you will see fire and smoke coming out of his nostrils like out of a furnace; but if you take the bit that you will find behind the stable door, and throw it into his mouth, he will become as quiet as a lamb and will let you do anything with him."

"I shall certainly follow your advice," said Yvon, saying which he seated himself beside Finette and began talking to her.

Do you want to know what they talked about? Well, about everything, and a great deal else besides; but whatever the conversation turned upon, it always veered round again to the subject of their engagement, and how they were to manage their escape from the giant. Time flies in agreeable conversation like theirs. Evening was closing in, and Yvon had completely forgotten the horse he was to fetch home. Finette was obliged to remind him of his duty, and sent him away to perform it before the giant's return. He took the bit down from behind the stable door and ran to the mountain. There he saw a horse nearly as big as an elephant coming at full speed toward him, with fire and smoke pouring out of his nostrils. Yvon waited till the huge beast came close to him, and then, just as he opened his enormous jaws, threw the bit into his mouth. The effect was magical—in a moment the horse became as quiet as a lamb. Yvon made him go down upon his knees, jumped on his back, and rode him quietly up to the house. His work accomplished, the young Breton seated himself in the porch in front of the house. As soon as he saw the giant coming he threw back his head, flourished his legs wildly about, and hummed a Breton melody.

"Hast caught the horse?" inquired the giant, frowning.

"Yes, master," replied Yvon, without moving. "That horse does you credit, he is a beauty, and so gentle; he is in the stable."

"We shall soon see that," roared the giant, as he entered the stable, grumbling.

Finding the horse there, he came out in a towering rage.

"You have seen my Finette," he cried, "or you would never have known how to do it by yourself."

"Master," said Yvon, opening his mouth and half shutting his eyes, "once for all, who or what is Myfinette? Will you let me see the creature?"

"Hold thy tongue, fool!" said the giant; "thou shalt see her soon enough, I warrant thee."

On the third day at dawn the giant was calling his sheep together to take them out to pasture, when he said to Yvon—

"To-day thou must go to the Infernal Regions to get my rent, after which," he said, with a chuckle, "amuse thyself. See what a pattern master I am."

"That he certainly is," thought Yvon; "but the task is none the easier. I shall go and see 'Myfinette' as the giant calls her; I want her advice badly to-day."

When he told Finette what his orders were, she asked him how he intended to carry them out.

"I don't know," replied Yvon sadly. "I have never been to the Infernal Regions, and should not know what to ask for; pray enlighten me?"

"Do you see that big rock over there?" asked Finette. "That is one of the gates of the Infernals. Take this stick, strike three times upon the stone, and you will see a demon spouting fire appear before you. Tell him the object of your visit; he will ask how much you want, to which you must answer, 'Not more than I can carry away with me.'"

"I will follow your instructions," said Yvon, seating himself beside Finette and entering into conversation with her; and I verily believe he would have been talking still if the girl had not sent him away to execute the giant's orders as daylight began to fade.

When he reached the spot pointed out by Finette he found himself in front of a huge granite rock, which he struck three times with his stick. The rock flew open, and a demon appeared spouting fire.



The rock flew open, and a demon appeared spouting fire (P. 177)

lay upon the ground as thick as the sand on the sea-shore.

Filling a sack with these treasures, Yvon threw it across his shoulders and returned home.

He then seated himself inside the porch, and as soon as he saw the giant coming he threw his head back, flourished his legs wildly about, and hummed a Breton melody.

"Hast thou been to the Infernal Regions to fetch my rent?" demanded the giant, frowning.

"What do you want?" cried he in a terrible voice.

"I have come for the giant's rent," answered Yvon, in an unmoved voice.

"How much is it?" said the demon.

"Not more than I can carry away with me," answered our hero.

"It is lucky you have not asked for more," said the fiery imp. "Enter this cave, and you will find what you require."

Yvon obeyed without hesitation, and was astounded by the sight that met his eyes. Gold, silver, diamonds, rubies, and emeralds

"Yes, master," replied Yvon, without moving; "the sack is lying there, and the amount of your rent is inside."

"We shall soon see that," roared the giant, as he opened the sack, which was so full that the gold and silver came tumbling out on all sides.

"You have seen my Finette," he cried; "you could not have known what to do else."

"Master," said Yvon, opening his mouth and half shutting his eyes, "you are always harping on the same string. Myfinette, Myfinette! I *must* see this mysterious being."

"Well, thou *shalt* see her," cried the giant in a rage. "Wait till to-morrow, and thou shalt make her acquaintance."

"Thank you, master," said Yvon, "that is very polite of you; but I can see by your face that you are taking me in."

CHAPTER III

THE next day the giant left the house without giving any orders to Yvon at all, which fact greatly disturbed Finette. About noon he returned, without his sheep, and complained of the heat and of being fatigued.

"Go to the front door," he said to Finette, "and you will see a lad there, my servant. Cut off his head and throw it into the largest saucepan, and call me when the soup is ready."

After giving this order he lay down on his bed and was soon fast asleep. His snores sounded like distant thunder rumbling over the mountains. Finette prepared a block, armed herself with a large knife, and called Yvon to her. She cut his little finger slightly, and three drops of blood fell upon the block.

"That will do," she said; "now help me to fill the saucepan."

They threw into it everything they could lay hands on—old clothes, boots and shoes, rugs, and a thousand and one things besides. Finette then took Yvon by the hand and led him through the three rooms on the ground floor. From the cauldron in the first of these she cast three golden

balls, from that in the second two silver balls, and from the one in the third one copper ball. Taking these with her, she ran out of the house with Yvon.

"Forward!" cried the latter, when he found himself in the open country. "Will you explain the meaning of this little game, my dear Finette?"

"Fly! fly! We must escape," she answered. "If we have not left this odious island by sunset we are lost."

"Forward!" said Yvon, laughing; "a fig for the giant!"

After snoring for about an hour the ogre stretched himself, opened one eye, and called out—

"Is it ready?"

"It has only just begun to boil," answered the first drop of blood upon the block.

The giant turned round and resumed his snoring for about an hour or two; then, stretching himself

and opening one eye, he called out—"Dost hear? is it ready?"

"It is simmering now," answered the second drop of blood.

The giant turned round and slept for another hour, after which he awoke and called out impatiently—

"It is not ready yet?"

"It is quite ready now," answered the third drop of blood.



Yvon and Finette threw into it everything they could lay hands on (p. 178)

The giant raised himself on his elbow, and, rubbing his eyes, looked round to see who had answered him, but he looked in vain, he could see no one.

"Finette," he roared, "where is my dinner?"

No answer. The ogre leaped from his bed in a rage, took up a gigantic spoon, plunged it into the cauldron which was hanging in front of the fireplace, and tasted the contents.

"Finette," he bellowed, "thou hast not seasoned it; what sort of broth dost thou call this? It does not taste like fish, flesh, or fowl." And, catching sight of a piece of a rug which was not quite boiled down, he literally danced with rage.

"Villains!" he cried, "you have deceived me, but I'll be even with you yet."

Saying which he seized a stick and rushed out of doors. His strides were so enormous that in less than a quarter of an hour he came in sight of the fugitives, who were still some distance from the sea-shore, and he woke the echoes for twenty miles round with his shouts of fiendish joy. Poor Finette trembled so violently that she could scarcely stand, but Yvon, pressing her to his heart, cried—

"Forward! we have not far to go now, and shall reach the sea before he comes up with us."

"Here he is! here he is!" shrieked Finette, pointing to the giant, who was not a hundred yards off. "We are lost if this talisman fails."

And throwing the copper ball on the ground, she said—

"O copper ball! O copper ball!
Let us not in his clutches fall!"

The words had scarce left her lips when the ground was rent asunder with a terrible noise, and an enormous chasm divided them from the giant, who had already stretched out one hand to seize his prey.

"Come, let us fly," cried Finette, pulling her companion by the arm as he stood laughing at the giant's discomfiture, and singing—

"Ogre, ogre, funny old man!
Try and catch us if you can!"

The giant rushed madly backward and forward along the edge of the precipice trying to find a way across, but



A. B. DIXON. 1908

He had no large pieces of rock upon the ship.

in vain. At last, in a fury, he uprooted a huge oak and hurled it across the chasm, the tree in its fall nearly crushing the young people with its great branches. The giant then placed himself across this impromptu bridge and rode on it as if he were upon horseback, the tree bending and swaying beneath his enormous weight.

Hanging thus between heaven and earth, he worked himself along, but his progress was necessarily slow, for he found some trouble in disentangling himself from among the branches.

When he had accomplished his journey, Yvon and Finette had already reached the shore, and the open sea was before them, Alas! there was not a sail in sight. Their case seemed hopeless; but Yvon, undaunted as usual, began picking up the pebbles on the beach, with which he purposed to attack the giant, determined, if he had to die, not to surrender without a struggle. Finette's excitement was intense. She took one of the silver balls in her hand, and repeated these words—

“O ball of silver gleaming bright,
Save us from our wretched plight!”

Scarcely had she pronounced this cabalistic sentence, when a ship in full sail, looking just like a beautiful swan with its snowy wings outspread, rose mysteriously out of the water. Yvon and Finette had to run a few yards into the sea to catch the rope which was thrown to them from the ship, and the giant arriving at that moment on the beach, panting and fuming, was just in time to see the vessel sailing rapidly away, leaving a long line of silvery foam in her wake.

It is a well-known fact that giants have an antipathy to water. Old Homer knew it when he associated it with Polyphemus, and we find it authenticated in all books on Natural History worthy of the name. Finette's late master was not an exception to the rule. He swore roundly when he saw that his slaves had escaped him, and ran up and down the beach, not knowing what to do. He hurled huge pieces of rock after the ship, which happily fell on either side of it, making a great splash as they displaced the water.

At last, frantic with anger, he plunged into the sea, and began swimming toward the ship with inconceivable rapidity. He cleared forty feet at each stroke, cleaving the waters in his progress like a powerful whale, and snorting like one.

He was gaining on his enemies—one stroke more and he would have been able to seize the helm; in fact he had already stretched out his hand to do so, when Finette threw the second silver ball into the sea, and cried in a voice broken with sobs—

“O ball of silver gleaming bright,
Save us from our wretched plight!”

Suddenly, out of the middle of the foaming waves, appeared a gigantic broadsword, measuring at least twenty feet in length. It was raised as if to strike the ogre, and he only just managed to elude it by plunging beneath the water. But the naked blade chased him wherever he darted to escape it, and he was obliged at last to swim for his life toward the island, which he succeeded in reaching half-dead with his superhuman exertions, and he threw himself, vanquished and exhausted, upon the strand.

“Forward!” cried Yvon, “we are saved!”

“Not yet,” replied Finette, who was trembling all over. “The giant’s godmother is a witch, and I fear she will visit her godson’s wrongs upon me. Do not leave me for an instant, Yvon. Something within me tells me that if you do, I shall have everything to fear until our nuptials are solemnized in the chapel at Clairvaux.”

“By the unicorn of my ancestors,” replied he, “you are not worthy to be a Breton! Am I not by your side? Do I mean to forsake you? What are you afraid of, then? Do you think we have been delivered out of the clutches of that monster to be shipwrecked in sight of land?”

He laughed heartily as he spoke, showing as he did so a dazzling row of teeth, and Finette was forced to join in and laugh with him at her foolish fears. Happy days of youth! The sun shines so brightly after the showers, the brightest days of after-life are not to be compared even to your saddest ones.

CHAPTER IV

THE rest of the journey was performed as if by magic. It seemed as if some invisible power were driving the ship toward the shores of Brittany. Twenty days after the commencement of the voyage they rode into a little bay close to the Castle of Clairvaux. Yvon stepped on shore with Finette, and turned round to thank the crew for their exertions, but not a vestige of the ship was to be seen! It had vanished completely, leaving no more trace behind it than a sea-gull leaves in its flight.

Yvon recognized the spot as one where he had often collected shells as a child, and where many a time he had hunted the tiny crabs out of their holes.

In less than half an hour he would see once more the Gothic towers of his old home, and his heart beat loudly as he turned and gazed fondly at Finette. For the first time he observed that her dress was most fantastic, and utterly unsuited to the position of a lady about to be allied to the house of Clairvaux.

"Dearest one," said he, "my father is of noble rank and accustomed to receive homage from everyone. I cannot introduce you to him in that dress, nor can I permit of your approaching the castle on foot; it is only inferiors who travel thus. Wait a few moments till I return. I am going to borrow a rich robe, and a palfrey for you to ride, from one of my sisters, for I choose that you should be received as a lady of rank, and my father himself shall descend the steps to meet you and lead you into the castle."

"Oh, Yvon, Yvon, do not leave me!" cried Finette. "I know you will forget me the moment you enter the castle gates."

"Forget you!" replied Yvon. "If anyone else had said such a thing to me, my sword would have taught him how to doubt the word of a Clairvaux. The Bretons are true to the core, as everyone knows, but they are obstinate too; no one will deny that."

Poor little Finette found it was no use trying to alter his decision, though she besought him in her most coaxing

tones. She was obliged to give in at last, sorely against the grain.

"Go along, then," she said, "but do not stay longer than you can help; speak to no one but your own family; only go to the stables, and return as soon as possible. You will find yourself surrounded by people, but you must pretend not to see them—and above all do not eat or drink anything. If you drink but a glass of water harm will come of it, and we shall both suffer."

Yvon promised to attend to all Finette's injunctions, but he laughed at her fears. He felt sure of himself, and prided himself on being very different from the volatile French, who change their minds so easily. When Yvon entered the castle he had some difficulty in recognizing it, such an unusual appearance did the sombre old walls present. All the windows were adorned with flowers and foliage inside and out, and the courtyard was hung with festoons. On one side were long tables groaning with food and wine, and on the other musicians were playing upon a *daïs* raised upon casks; while youths and maidens, dressed out in all their finery, were singing and dancing.

It was evidently a *fête* day at the castle; the Baron himself joined in the festivities, for you must know that he was celebrating the marriage of his fifth daughter to the Chevalier de Roquefort, and this union was a feather in the cap of the ancient house of Clairvaux. Yvon was recognized by everyone, and he received a perfect ovation from all sides; he was surrounded by all the members of his family, who crowded round him to embrace him and shake hands with him. Where had he been? What had he been doing? Had he conquered a kingdom? or had he become possessed of a duchy? or perhaps a barony? And had he brought a *parure* of diamonds for the bride? Had the fairies befriended him? And how many rivals had he overthrown in the tilting-field? A perfect fire of questions was poured in on him at once. Yvon kissed his father's hand respectfully, and made his way straight through the people up to his sisters' apartments, selected two of their most gorgeous robes, then went to the stables, saddled one of the palfreys and

mounted a fine Spanish jennet himself. He was leaving the grounds, when he was waylaid by all his relations and friends and his squires and vassals, with glasses in their hands, who all wished to drink the health of their young lord, and to wish him a safe return. Yvon thanked them, one and all, with high-born grace; he waved farewell to his assembled friends, and with some difficulty made his way through the crowd. Just as he reached the outer gates, and was going to cross the drawbridge, which had been lowered, a lady approached him whom he did not recognize. He conjectured that she was the bridegroom's sister; she was very fair, and had a somewhat haughty expression, and held a lady-apple in her hand.

"Noble sir," said she, with a strange smile, "you will not refuse a request from a lady, I am sure. I beg you to taste this apple. Even should you not be either hungry or thirsty, after your long journey, you know the laws of gallantry too well to say me nay."

This appeal Yvon did not dare to refuse; but it was a fatal error. He had scarcely taken one bite out of the apple, when he looked round like a man waking out of a dream.

"What am I doing on horseback?" thought he; "and why am I leading this palfrey? My proper place is by my father's side at my sister's wedding. What am I leaving this castle for?"

He gave the reins to a groom, leaped lightly to the ground, and offered his hand to the fair lady, who accepted him as her cavalier, and she gave him her bouquet to hold as a mark of her favour. Before the day was over there was another affianced couple at the Castle of Clairvaux. Yvon had pledged his troth to the fair stranger and Finette was forgotten.

CHAPTER V

IN the meanwhile Finette waited in vain by the seashore for Yvon's return. The sun sank to rest behind the crimson waves, and Finette, sighing deeply, rose and took the path which led to the castle. Her way led her through

a hollow, thickly grown with furze-bushes; she had not gone very far when she found herself in front of a dilapidated cottage, at the door of which sat an old hag milking a cow.

Finette made a courtesy to the old woman, and begged for a night's shelter. With her slippers edged with fur, her full skirt of russet brown, her blue bodice trimmed with bugles, and her diadem, she looked more like a gipsy than a Christian woman. The hag stared at her from head to foot, frowned, and shaking her fist at the poor homeless wanderer, cried—

“Begone, sorceress! I have no room in my respectable house for such as thee.”

“Good mother,” said Finette, “a corner of the stable is all I ask for.”

“Oh, very well,” replied the old woman, showing the only tooth in her head, and which stuck straight out in a most aggressive manner, “I will let thee have a corner of the stable if thou wilt give me this milk-pail full of gold.”

“I close with the bargain,” said Finette, quietly, as she opened the leathern bag hanging at her girdle, and took from thence a golden ball, which she threw into the pail, repeating these words—

“Golden ball, I humbly pray,
Send me help without delay!”

No sooner said than done. Several gold pieces appeared at the bottom of the pail, tumbling about in a most lively manner; these were followed by others, the pail getting fuller and fuller every minute, and the gold pieces jumping like fish caught in a net. The old woman had fallen on her knees, and was looking on open-mouthed. When the pail was quite full, she got up, passed her arm through the handle, courtesied to Finette, and said—

“Madam, everything is yours, the house, the cow, and all I possess. What a lucky day for me! I shall live in the town like a lady, and never do anything. Oh, deary me! if I were only sixty years old again!”

And then, without looking either to the right or to the left, she set off running as fast as she could, crutch and all,

in the direction of the Castle of Clairvaux. Finette went into the cottage, and found it a miserable place, dark, damp, and stuffy, with low ceilings, and full of dust and spiders' webs. What a contrast it must have presented to the giant's splendid mansion!



Gold pieces appeared jumping like fish caught in a net (P. 186)

Finette walked to the hearth, where a few damp furze-branches were smouldering, and taking another golden ball out of her bag, she threw it on the fire and pronounced the magic sentence—

“Golden ball,
I humbly pray,
Send me help
without delay!”

In a twinkling the gold had melted down, and began to pour through the cottage in a liquid stream, changing everything into gold—the walls, roof, the wooden chair, the stool, the bed, the horns of the cow, everything, even to the spiders and spiders' webs, turned into gold, till the cottage shone in the moonlight like a brilliant star.

After Finette had milked the cow, and had drunk a little milk, she lay down on the bed, dressed as she was, thoroughly tired out with the fatigues of the day, and cried herself to sleep.

Old women are terrible gossips, at least they are in Brittany. No sooner had the late owner of the cottage arrived at the hamlet in which the castle stood, than she went straight to the steward. He was a very important person indeed, and had often made her quake in her shoes when, by mistake, she had driven her cow into a neighbour's field. The steward listened to her story, shrugged his

shoulders more than once during its recital, and hinted that it savoured of witchcraft. Assuming a profound air of mystery, he fetched a pair of scales, in which he carefully weighed the gold pieces. He proved them all to be standard coin, helped himself to as many as he could, and advised his visitor to say nothing about the affair to anyone.

"If the magistrate or the seneschal were to interfere in the business, my good woman," he said, "ten to one you would never see one of your 'yellow boys' again. Justice is strictly impartial, and is not to be turned by favour or otherwise from her course, but simply takes everything."

The old woman thanked him for his advice, which she promised to follow. That evening she told the story to two of her most intimate cronies, but then they swore by their grandchildren that they would not betray the secret, an oath so solemn and binding, and withal so sacredly kept, that by noon the following day there was not an urchin in the street who did not point at the old woman; and the very dogs seemed, as they barked, to repeat the words which the boys called after her—

"Witch, witch, so wrinkled and old,
Won't you give us some of your gold?"

The steward, as he was going to bed that night, thought a good deal about what he had heard. "A wife who can fill milk-pails with gold whenever she likes, is not to be picked up every day," said he to himself. "What did it matter if she did dabble in witchcraft? She would be a treasure to any man."

The result of his meditations was that he got up the next morning before daybreak, resolved on paying his court to the stranger. As the earliest streaks of dawn appeared, he noticed a spot of brilliant light in the wood, and what was his astonishment to see, on a nearer inspection, that the wretched hovel was transformed into a golden house. But what surprised and delighted him even more was the discovery that a lovely maiden, with dark locks and with the air of an empress, was seated in the window at her distaff. With the self-complacency which distinguishes mankind in general, the steward did not believe there was a

woman in the world who would not be overjoyed to accept his hand in marriage. Therefore, without any beating about the bush, he then and there made his offer to Finette. She received it with peals of laughter, which enraged the steward.

"Beware how you cross me," said the steward, in threatening tones. "I am master here. No one knows you, nor where you come from. The gold which you gave to the old woman has already brought suspicion upon you. There is magic at work in this house, and if you don't promise to marry me, I will have you taken up, and you will be burned as a witch before the sun goes down, in front of the Castle of Clairvaux."

"You are really too kind," replied Finette, making a low courtesy; "and I must allow that there is a peculiar charm in the way you pay your addresses to ladies; even when they have made up their minds, you can overrule their scruples by the most persuasive arguments."

"We Bretons are frank and blunt," returned her visitor. "Take your choice, shall it be marriage or imprisonment?"

"Well, I must consider," said Finette, as she laid aside her distaff. "But look first at the fire; a cinder has fallen on the floor!"

"Pray do not move," said the steward; "I will pick it up."

"Thank you," said Finette; "and will you be good enough to make up the fire, and put the ashes at the back? Have you got the tongs?"

"Yes," answered the steward, as he began picking up the cinders.

"Abracadabra!" cried Finette, jumping up. "May the tongs stick to your fingers, and your fingers to the tongs, until sunset!"

The charm worked instantaneously. The miserable wretch had to stand there all day, picking up hot cinders, the sparks of which flew in his face, and into his eyes. It was no good his crying, entreating, or swearing, all of which he tried in turn, for there was no one to hear him. Finette would no doubt have taken pity on him had she remained

in the cottage, but after working her spells upon him, she had run down to the beach, and there, forgetting everything else, waited for Yvon, who never came.

As the sun went down, the tongs fell from the steward's hands. The instant he was free he took to his heels, and ran home as if a mad bull were after him. He looked such a piteous object, all burned and blackened, and uttered such dismal moans, that everyone avoided him as if he were out of his mind.

One or two, more bold than the rest, accosted him; but he gave them no answer and rushed past them, looking thoroughly ashamed of himself, and never stopping till he was safe in his own house.

That same evening, when Finette returned home sad and disconsolate, the steward was no longer there, but she found an equally obnoxious person awaiting her.

The magistrate had heard the story of the gold pieces, and he also had made up his mind to marry the strange lady. He was a very different man from the steward, being fat and jolly; and he could not speak without shaking his fat sides with laughing, and when he laughed he showed a great row of yellow teeth, and snorted like a grampus; but he was quite as determined and just as troublesome as the steward had been. Finette implored him to go away and leave her in peace, but he only laughed the louder, as he gave her to understand that by his office he had power to imprison and even to hang whom he would, without the formality of a trial, if he so pleased.

Finette clasped her hands together and wept, but the magistrate paid no heed to her prayers and entreaties. He drew a parchment roll from his pocket upon which he had drawn out a contract of marriage, and declared that he would not leave the house till she had signed it, if he had to remain there all night.

"But," added he, "if you have any objection to me personally, I will not insist. I have another document here on which I can write something very different. Is it my face you object to? because, if it is, you can shut your eyes." Saying this, he held his throat with one hand, and thrust

out his tongue—a graceful action, and one calculated to cheer Finette considerably.

“Alas!” said she, “I might consent to your proposal if I could be sure you would make a good husband, but I am afraid——”

“What are you afraid of, my dear child?” said the magistrate, smiling from ear to ear, and looking as sweet as sugar.

“Do you think,” replied she, “that a good husband would leave the door open like that, and not see that the cold air was freezing his wife?”

“You are quite right, my love,” said the magistrate; “I am so stupid; but I will shut it directly.”

“Have you got hold of the latch?” said Finette.

“Yes, my dear,” returned the magistrate, cheerfully. “I am going to pull it to.”

“Abracadabra!” cried Finette; “may you hold the door, and may the door hold you fast, until to-morrow morning!”

What a sight! There was the door flying open one minute, and banging to the next, and it continued to do so all through the night, keeping the miserable man flying backward and forward without any rest. He had never been led such a dance before, and I should not think he wished to lead such another as long as he lived. He cried, he screamed, he swore, he prayed for mercy. It was all waste of breath. The door could not hear him, and Finette had fallen asleep!



The door . . . kept the miserable man flying backward and forward without any rest (P. 191)

As the day dawned, his stiffened fingers relaxed their hold, and he fell on the ground head foremost. He set off running the instant he had picked himself up, never once looking round for fear the door should be coming after him. Luckily for him there was no one astir yet in the village of Clairvaux, and he got home and to bed before anyone had seen him in his ridiculous plight; for he was covered with dust from head to foot, and so haggard and white, he looked like a miller just escaped from the lower regions.

When Finette opened her eyes she saw a tall man standing before her, dressed in black, with a black velvet cap, and a sword at his side. He was the seneschal of the court and barony of Clairvaux. His arms were folded, and he was looking at the young girl with an expression in his eyes that froze her to the marrow.

"What is thy name?" demanded he in a voice of thunder.

"My name is Finette," replied she in a trembling voice.

"This house and all the golden furniture, do they belong to thee?"

"Yes, sir; they are at your service."

"So I intend them to be," answered the frowning seneschal. "Rise, girl, I am going to do thee the honour of making thee my wife, and taking thy property and thyself under my protection."

"Sir," replied Finette, "it is too great an honour for a poor girl like me. I am a friendless stranger, without a relation in the world."

"Silence, vassal," said the seneschal; "I am thy lord and master, and thou must obey me. Sign this paper."

"I do not know how to write, sir," said Finette.

"And dost thou think that I know how to write more than thou? I am no clerk. A cross is the signature of a true gentleman."

He made a big cross at the foot of the document as he spoke, and then held out the pen to her.

Finette made no reply; but jumping out of the window, ran and hid herself in the cowshed. The seneschal followed her, but when he tried to enter he found the doorway

blocked up. The cow, frightened at the precipitate entrance of the girl, had rushed to the door, and Finette, holding the creature by the horns, made her serve as a shield between herself and her pursuer.

"Witch!" roared the seneschal, "thou shalt not escape me thus," and with the strength of a Hercules he took the cow by the tail and dragged her out of the shed.

"Abracadabra!" cried Finette. "May the cow's tail hold you fast, and may you hold the cow's tail till you have both been round the world."

No sooner had the words left her lips than off started the cow like a flash of lightning, dragging the unfortunate seneschal after her. Nothing stopped their mad career. They flew over mountains and valleys, marshes and rivers; they skimmed the surface of the sea without drowning; they froze in Siberia, were boiled in Africa; scaled the Himalaya, slid down Mont Blanc, and finally, panting and out of breath, came to a standstill, after thirty-six hours' travelling, in the market-place of the village of Clairvaux.

A seneschal hanging on to the tail of a cow is not to be seen every day of one's life, and so a considerable crowd gathered round them. But, torn as his clothes were by the wild cacti of Barbary and by the forests of Tartary, the seneschal did not abate a jot of his dignity.

He ordered off the crowd with threats and menaces, and then sought his house with limping gait, anxious to obtain the rest and refreshment of which he stood so much in need.

CHAPTER VI

WHILE the steward, the magistrate, and the seneschal were going through these exciting scenes, which, by the way, they did not think worth relating to their friends, preparations on a grand scale were being made at the castle of Clairvaux for the wedding of Yvon and the fair stranger.

At last everything was in readiness. The guests had assembled, some of whom had come a distance of twenty leagues, and Yvon and his affianced bride, and the Baron

and Baroness de Clairvaux took their places in a large chariot decorated with flowers and evergreens and drove off to the celebrated abbey of Saint Maclon. On either side of the carriage a hundred knights in armour rode on horseback, their visors up in honour of the occasion, and their lances at rest. Behind every knight rode his squire, each carrying the seignorial banner of his master. At the head of the procession the seneschal was to be seen on his prancing steed, his golden staff of office in his hand. Behind him walked the magistrate with solemn mien, followed by the courtiers and vassals of the Baron; and lastly the steward, who was employed in keeping the crowd in order—an unruly mass of idle and curious spectators, who were as free with their tongues as with their eyes. About a mile from the castle, just as they were about to ford a stream which crossed the road, one of the wheels of the Baron's chariot came off, which brought the procession to a standstill. The damage repaired, the coachman whipped up the horses; but they started forward so violently that the axle broke in three places.

Six times did they replace the unlucky bit of wood, and six times was it broken; and in vain did they try to get the chariot out of the hole in which it had stuck. Everyone had something to suggest; those who were coach-builders by trade paraded their knowledge, and even the steward, who would not be behindhand, stepped forward and addressed the Baron as follows, hat in hand, and scratching his head:

“My noble lord, in that house yonder, embowered in trees, lives a very remarkable person. If your Excellency were to ask her to lend you her pair of tongs to make an axle of, I warrant that it would hold till to-morrow morning.”

The Baron inclined his head, and ten peasants ran to Finette's dwelling to borrow her golden tongs, which she lent with charming grace. They were made to do duty as an axle, and lo! the horses began to draw the carriage as easily as if it had been a feather. There was a murmur of general satisfaction, but this did not last long. About a hundred yards further on the bottom of the carriage gave way and fell out. It was a mercy that the illustrious occupants were not left on the road. In a moment the carpenters

were at work, sawing planks and knocking in nails, and in a very short time the accident was repaired.

“Forward! noble family of Clairvaux!” but the carriage now took it into its head to come in two; half of it remained behind with the Baroness and the bride, while the Baron and Yvon were carried off at full speed in the other half.



One of the wheels of the Baron's chariot came off (P. 194)

Here was a fresh disaster; they were at their wits' end—what was to be done? The carriage had been broken and been mended three times—was it bewitched? Everyone had something to suggest: even the magistrate, taking courage, addressed the Baron with a low bow, as follows:

“Your Excellency, in that house which you see yonder through the trees lives a wonderful person. If your lordship

were to ask her for the loan of one of the panels of her door to mend the floor of your carriage with, I warrant it would hold till to-morrow."

The Baron inclined his head, and twenty peasants ran to Finette's dwelling, at whose request she graciously lent them one of the golden panels of her door.

They placed it in the bottom of the carriage, and it fitted in as if it had been made on purpose. The procession now moved on again, the abbey appeared in sight, and the troubles of the journey seemed at an end. Not a bit of it. The horses came to a full stop and refused to move. There were four of them to start with; they now harnessed two more to the carriage to no purpose; then they tried eight, then twelve, and at last twenty-four! It made no difference, the chariot would not move. The more the coachman lashed the horses the deeper did the wheels sink into the ground; what was to be done? Get out and proceed on foot? Impossible! it would be so humiliating. No, that would not be consistent with the dignity of the Clairvaux. They tried to lift the carriage, they pushed it from behind, they cried, they grew desperate; but though they talked a great deal they made no progress. Daylight was fading, and the hour fixed for the wedding was passing by. The case was desperate.

Everyone had something to suggest. The seneschal, taking courage, dismounted and approached the Baron, and taking off his velvet cap, spoke as follows:—

"My lord, in the house which you see shining yonder through the trees lives a wonderful person. If your lordship were to take my advice and borrow her cow, I warrant that the animal would draw the carriage till to-morrow morning if you so pleased."

The Baron inclined his head, and thirty peasants instantly ran to Finette's house, at whose request she very obligingly lent them her cow with the golden horns. It was not exactly the style in which the fair bride had expected to arrive at the abbey—in a carriage drawn by a cow!—but it was better than remaining on the road and not being married at all. So the cow was harnessed in front of the four horses, and

everybody watched anxiously to see what the creature would do.

Before the coachman had even cracked his whip she started off as if she were going to make the tour of the world a second time.

Horses, chariot, Baron, Baroness, bride, bridegroom, and coachman, were whirled off by the excited animal. In vain did the knights spur on their horses in pursuit, in vain the peasants and attendants ran as fast as their legs could carry them, across country, taking all the short cuts; the carriage went like the wind. On arriving at the abbey, the occupants would fain have alighted. All the preparations had been made, and the wedding party had been expected for some time; but the cow, instead of stopping at the door, redoubled her speed. Thirteen times did she gallop round the abbey at a fearful pace. Then all at once, retracing her steps, made for the castle in a straight line across the fields, and at such a rate that it was a miracle that the party was alive when at last it stopped at the door of the old castle.

CHAPTER VII

OF course the wedding could not take place that day, but the tables were already spread with the wedding feast, and the Baron de Clairvaux understood the laws of hospitality too well to allow his friends to disperse without inviting them to sup in true Breton fashion—that is to say, from sunset till sunrise, or maybe later.

The order was given for the company to be seated. There were eight rows of tables arranged in the form of horseshoes, each horseshoe being composed of ninety-six tables. At the end of the room was a platform, carpeted with velvet pile, in the middle of which stood a table larger than any of the others, piled with fruit and flowers, and good things, among which were conspicuous great haunches of venison and roast peacocks adorned with their natural plumage. This table was set apart for the wedding party, so that they might be seen of the whole company, that nothing should be wanting to the general enjoyment. The

humblest person present might pledge the young couple in a bumper of mead, and drink to the ancient and noble House of Clairvaux.

The Baron invited his one hundred knights to sit at his table, their squires standing behind their chairs to serve them. On the Baron's right sat Yvon and his affianced bride, but the chair on his left was unoccupied. Calling one of his pages to him he said—

"Hie thee to the stranger who gave her assistance so promptly to-day. It was not her fault that the result surpassed her expectations. Tell her that the Baron de Clairvaux tenders her his thanks for her kindness, and invites her to the marriage banquet of his son the Chevalier Yvon."

The page found Finette weeping when he arrived at the golden house.

Kneeling on one knee, he invited her, in the name of the Baron, to accompany him back to the castle, that she might grace the feast with her presence.

"Convey my thanks to thy master," haughtily replied Finette, "and tell him if he is too proud to come to me, that I am too proud to go to him."

When the page delivered this message to the Baron, the latter struck the table such a blow with his fist that the glasses jumped in the air.

"By the House of Clairvaux," he cried, "that is an answer full of dignity. I feel myself rebuked. Saddle my bay mare instantly, and tell my squires and pages to be in readiness to accompany me."

It was thus brilliantly attended that the Baron arrived at the golden house. He made ample apologies to Finette, offered her his hand, and holding the stirrup for her helped her to mount beside him. She might have been the Duchess of Brittany herself! He did not address one word to her all the way—this was etiquette—and on their arrival at the castle he lifted his plumed hat, and thus uncovered, conducted her to the seat of honour prepared for her.

The Baron's departure had caused a general stir, and his return created equal excitement. Everyone was asking the name of the lady who was thus honoured by the proud

Baron. She appeared to be a foreigner by her dress. Was she the Duchess of Normandy? or perhaps she was the Queen of France herself?

The steward, the magistrate, and the seneschal were closely interrogated. The steward trembled, the magistrate turned pale, and the seneschal became crimson. Each and all kept silence, which only served to increase the general curiosity.

Finette was the cynosure of all eyes, and yet she was miserable. Yvon had seen her enter, but he had not recognized her; he had given her but a passing glance, and had then devoted himself to the fair lady beside him, who listened to his tender speeches with a scornful curl on her lip.

In despair poor Finette drew the last remaining golden ball from the bag at her side. While she was conversing with the Baron, who was charmed by her sparkling wit, she turned the little ball over in her hand, and whispered quite low—

“Golden ball, I humbly pray,
Send me help without delay.”

No sooner had she pronounced the words than the ball grew suddenly quite large, and turned into a goblet of chased gold—a more splendid drinking cup had never graced the table of the king himself!

Finette filled the goblet herself with spiced mead, and calling the seneschal, who was hiding himself behind her chair all of a tremor, said in a sweet voice—

“Good seneschal, I pray thee take this goblet to the Chevalier Yvon, and tell him I would drink his health; he will not refuse to drink mine, I know.”

Yvon took the goblet carelessly off the salver of enamel and gold which the seneschal handed him, and drank some of its contents as he bowed to the stranger.

Setting the cup down on the table beside him, he resumed his conversation with his fair companion, who engrossed his attention completely. She appeared to be ill at ease and annoyed; Yvon whispered a few words in her ear, which seemed to charm her, for her eyes sparkled, and she laid her hand on her companion's arm.

Finette hung her head, and wept silently. All hope was over.

"My children," cried the Baron, in hearty tones, "fill your glasses, and drink to the beauty and goodness of the noble stranger who has honoured us to-day with her presence. To the lady of the golden mansion!"

A hubbub of voices immediately arose, and everyone drank to the stranger guest.

Yvon lifted his goblet to a level with his eyes, when all at once, he began to tremble violently, and could not speak; his mouth remained open, and his eyes fixed; he was like a man who sees a vision. He did see a vision. In the gold of the goblet he beheld as in a mirror, a series of scenes out of his past life. There was the giant pursuing him, and Finette urging him to fly; as this disappeared, he saw himself and Finette embarking on board the ship which conveyed them to Brittany; then they were landed, he was leaving her and she was weeping. As he looked, he remembered Finette. What had become of her? She must be beside him. Was not her proper place at his side? He turned to his companion, and then uttered a cry as if he had trodden upon a reptile. Swaying from side to side, like a drunken man, he started up and looked round the table with haggard eyes.

When he discovered Finette, he held out both hands, and, in a voice broken with sobs, cried—

"Finette, wilt thou forgive me?" And he fell on his knees before her.

"To err is human—to forgive divine."

So thought Finette. Before long she was seated beside Yvon, conversing in low tones. No one heard what they said to each other, but they cried and laughed by turns.

And the fair lady!—what had become of her? I cannot tell you. Just as Yvon uttered that cry, she vanished. Chroniclers relate that a hideous old hag was seen flying away from the castle on a broomstick, and that the dogs all turned out and barked at her. It is a popular belief in the Clairvaux family that the fair lady was one and the same person as the giant's godmother, the witch. However,

this has not been verified, so I cannot testify to its having any foundation in truth. What I can state positively without exceeding the limits of the historian is, that the wedding festivities, although interrupted for a few moments, were resumed with fresh spirit, and were continued up to a very late hour.

On the morrow, at an early hour, the party adjourned to the chapel, where, to his unbounded joy, Yvon was married to Finette, who felt that now no spell could harm her in future.

After the ceremony, they feasted right royally, and danced for thirty-six hours, without anyone thinking of breaking up the party.

The steward's arm ached, the magistrate rubbed his back at intervals, and the seneschal's legs were stiff; but all three had a weight on their consciences, which they thus hoped to get rid of. So they frisked about like young things, until they fairly dropped on the floor, and had to be carried off to bed.

Finette did not seek to revenge herself on them. She only cared to make everybody happy around her, especially those who belonged in ever so remote a degree to the noble house of Clairvaux. Her memory is still fresh in Brittany, and, among the ruins of the old castle, the statue of the good lady is still pointed out, holding five little balls in her hand.

THE SHEPHERD PASHAW (A TURKISH STORY)



Ali

ONCE upon a time there lived at Bagdad a pashaw who, though a favourite with the Sultan, was by no means beloved by his subjects. Ali (for such was his name) was a true Mussulman of the old school. As soon as dawn permitted him to distinguish white from black he spread his carpet on the ground, and with his face turned toward Mecca piously performed his ablutions and said his prayers. This done,

two black slaves attired in scarlet brought him his pipe and coffee. Ali then seated himself crossed-legged on a divan, and there remained the livelong day. His way of governing was to drink black, bitter, and scalding Arabian coffee out of little cups, to leisurely smoke Smyrna tobacco in a long narghil, to sleep, to do nothing, and think even less. Every month, it is true, there came an order from Stamboul enjoining him to send a million piasters, the tax

of the pashawlik, to the imperial treasury; and then Ali, rousing himself from his ordinary inertia, would call before him the richest merchants of Bagdad, and politely demand of them two million piasters. These poor men, striking their breasts and plucking out their beards, would raise their hands to heaven, and, with tears, would swear that they had not a para,¹ and implore the pashaw and the Sultan to have pity on them. Whereupon Ali, continuing to sip his coffee, had them bastinadoed on the soles of their feet until the money which they said did not exist, but which, nevertheless, somehow they managed to produce, was brought to him. The sum counted out, the faithful governor sent half to the Sultan, and threw the other half into his own coffers, and then he returned to his former occupation. Sometimes on those occasions, in spite of his exemplary patience, he used to complain of the cares of greatness and the fatigues of office; but the next day he thought no more about it, and the following month he would collect the tax with his usual calmness and disinterestedness.

Next to his pipe, his coffee, and money, what Ali loved best was his daughter, Eyes' Delight. He had good reason to love her, for in his daughter, as in a living mirror, Ali saw the reflection of himself and all his virtues. As indolent as she was beautiful, Eyes' Delight could not move a step without three women always at hand to wait on her; a white slave had the care of her toilet and *coiffure*, a yellow slave held her mirror and her fan, and a black slave amused her by grimaces and received her caresses or her blows. Every morning the pashaw's daughter went out driving in a great chariot drawn by bullocks; she stayed three hours at the bath, and the rest of the day she spent in visiting, and eating candied rose-leaves, and drinking sherbets made from the pomegranate, and looking in at dancing-girls, and making fun of her friends. After a day so profitably spent, she returned to the palace, embraced her father, and slept the sleep of the just. Reading, reflection, embroidery, and music were fatiguing, so Eyes' Delight took care to leave all these to

¹ The para is less than a halfpenny.

her attendants. When one is young and beautiful, and rich, or is the daughter of a pashaw, one is bound to amuse one's self; and what can be more amusing or more delightful than to do nothing? Thus the Turks reason, and how many Christians there are who are Turks in this particular!

Happiness is never without alloy here below, otherwise this earth would make us forget heaven. Ali found this to be the case. One tax day, the vigilant pashaw, less awake than usual, had by mistake ordered a Greek *raya* who was a *protégé* of England, to be bastinadoed. The victim cried, as was to be expected; but the English consul, who would stand no nonsense, cried louder still; and England, who never sleeps, cried loudest of all. Extreme indignation was expressed by the newspapers and in Parliament, and strong language was used at Constantinople. So much fuss about a trifle annoyed the Sultan, and not being able to get rid of his faithful ally, of whom he stood in awe, he wanted at least to rid himself of the pashaw, the innocent cause of all this disturbance. His highness's first idea was to have his old friend bowstringed, but he remembered that the punishment of a Mussulman would afford too much pleasure to those dogs of Christians who were always barking. So of his great clemency, the commander of the faithful contented himself with ordering the pashaw to be cast on some desert shore, and there left to die of hunger.

Luckily for Ali, his successor and his judge was an old pashaw in whom age tempered zeal, and who knew by experience that a sultan's wishes are only immutable in theory. He said to himself that the day might come when his highness would regret an old friend, and that he might then be pleased with a clemency that cost him nothing. He ordered Ali and his daughter to be brought to him privately, supplied them with the dresses of slaves, and a few piasters, and warned them that if they should be found in the pashawlik the next day, or should they ever be heard of again, they would be either bowstringed or beheaded, whichever they preferred. Ali thanked him for his goodness, and an hour afterward he and his daughter set off in company with a caravan bound for Syria. The same evening the

pashaw's fall and banishment were proclaimed in the streets of Bagdad. There was universal rejoicing; everybody praised the justice and vigilance of the Sultan, whose watchful eye was ever open to his children's misery. And the following month when the new pashaw, whose hand was rather heavy, demanded two and a half millions of piasters, the good people of Bagdad paid them without a murmur, so thankful were they to have at last escaped from the clutches of the brigand who had robbed them with impunity for so many years.

To escape with one's head is something, but still it is not everything. One must live, and that is a hard task for a man accustomed to depend upon the labour and the money of others. On arriving at Damascus, Ali found himself without resources. Unknown and friendless, he was dying of hunger; and, sadder still for a father, he saw his daughter daily growing more and more wan, and fading away beside him. What was to be done in this extremity? Was he to beg? That were unworthy of a man who the preceding evening had a people at his feet. Was he to work? Ali had always lived in a dignified manner, and did not know how to turn his hand to anything. His one secret when he had need of money was to have people bastinadoed, but to exercise this respectable industry in peace it is necessary to be a pashaw, and to have leave from the Sultan. Any attempt to carry on an amateur trade of this kind has its risks and perils; the perpetrator exposes himself to be hanged as a highwayman. Pashaws do not approve of competition, as Ali well knew; and he had been pleased to bowstring from time to time some petty thief who had had the folly to encroach on the domain of his betters.

One day when he had eaten nothing, and Eyes' Delight, worn out with fasting, could not rise from the mat on which she was lying, Ali wandered out along the streets of Damascus like a famished wolf. He remarked some men with jars of oil on their heads which they were carrying to a neighbouring shop. At the entrance of the shop was a clerk who paid the porters a para for each journey. The sight of this little copper-piece made the old pashaw's heart beat. He took his place in the file, and ascending a narrow

stair, received in charge an enormous jar which he had great difficulty in balancing on his head, even when holding it with both hands.

With neck bowed, shoulders squared, and knitted brows, Ali was coming down the stairs one step at a time, when at the third step he felt his load falling forward. He threw himself back, but his foot slipped, and he rolled to the bottom of the staircase along with the jar, which was broken to pieces, while he was deluged by the river of oil. As he picked himself up much ashamed, he felt himself seized by the scruff of his neck by the clerk of the house.

"You clumsy fellow," said the last mentioned, "pay me at once fifty piasters to make up for the damage you have done, and leave the place! When you do not understand a business, you had better not meddle with it in future."

"Fifty piasters!" cried Ali, smiling bitterly. "Where do you want me to get them from? I have not a para."

"If you cannot pay me with money, you must pay me with your skin," replied the clerk harshly.

And on a sign from the man, Ali was seized by two pair of strong arms and thrown on the ground, his feet secured with two ropes, and there, in the same attitude in which he had so often seen others, he received on the soles of his feet fifty blows from a stick as vigorously applied as if a pashaw had presided at the execution. He got up bleeding and limping, and having bound some rags round his feet, dragged himself homeward, sighing.

"Allah is great," he murmured: "it is just that I should suffer what I have so often made others suffer. But the Bagdad merchants that I caused to be bastinadoed were more fortunate than I; they had friends to pay for them, while I am dying of hunger."

He was mistaken. A kind-hearted woman, who, accidentally or through curiosity, had witnessed his misfortune, took pity on him. She gave him some oil to dress his wounds, a small bag of flour, and a few handfuls of lentils to keep him till his feet should be healed, and that evening for the first time since his fall, Ali slept peacefully, without anxiety for the morrow.

Nothing sharpens the wits like illness and solitude. In his enforced seclusion, a bright idea struck Ali.

"I have been a fool," thought he, "to undertake porter's work; a pashaw has not a strong enough head. It is only an ox who has that. What particularly distinguishes people of my rank is cleverness, that is to say neat-handedness. I was a first-rate sportsman, and over and above that I know how people flatter and how they lie. I am a good judge, for I have been a pashaw. I will choose a calling in which I can astonish the world by my brilliant qualities, and quickly acquire an honest fortune."



Ali rolled to the bottom of the staircase (P. 206)

Whereupon Ali became a barber.

At first all went well. Our new barber's master made him draw water, clean out the shop, shake the mats, arrange the utensils, and serve pipes and coffee to the customers. In all these delicate matters Ali acquitted himself admirably. If by chance the head of some peasant from the mountains was entrusted to him, a slip of the razor passed unnoticed; those good people are thick skinned, and, being well aware that they are made to be flayed, a little more or a little less skin off makes no difference to them.

One morning, in his master's absence, there came to the shop a great personage, the mere sight of whom alarmed poor Ali. It was the pashaw's buffoon, a horrible little hunchback, with a head like a pumpkin, long hairy

hands, rolling eyes, and the teeth of a monkey, While Ali poured the perfumed lather over his head, the buffoon lying on his back on the chair amused himself with pinching the new barber, laughing in his face, and putting out his tongue at him. Twice he made him drop the soap-dish, which delighted him so much both times that he threw him four paras. However, the prudent Ali kept his countenance; wholly occupied with the care of such a precious head, he used the razor as carefully and delicately as possible, when all at once the hunchback made a hideous grimace and screamed, so that the barber, suddenly startled, withdrew his hand, carrying off at the end of the razor half an ear which was not his own.

Buffoons like to laugh, but at other people's expense. There are no people more thin-skinned than those who are fond of laughing at their neighbours.

To fall tooth and nail upon Ali and almost strangle him, crying "Murder; murder!" was the work of a moment with the hunchback. Luckily for Ali the gash was so deep that the wounded man was obliged to attend to his ear, which was bleeding profusely. Ali profited by a favourable moment, and fled through the streets of Damascus with the swiftness of a man who knew that if he were caught he would be hanged.

After many windings and turnings, he managed to hide himself in an empty cellar, and did not dare to regain his dwelling till he could do so under cover of night. To remain at Damascus after such an accident was certain death, so Ali had no difficulty in convincing his daughter that it was absolutely necessary to set off immediately. Their luggage did not hamper them, and before morning they had gained the mountains. During three days they walked without stopping, having nothing to eat beyond a few figs gathered from trees by the roadside, and a little water which they found with great difficulty at the bottom of some nearly dry watercourses. But there is a silver lining to every cloud, and the truth is, that never in all the time of their splendour and magnificence had the pashaw and his daughter eaten and drunk with such excellent appetites.

At their last halting place the fugitives were welcomed by a worthy peasant, who largely practised the sacred duty of hospitality. After supper he talked with Ali, and seeing him without resources, he offered to take him as his shepherd.



*A young girl was plaiting her
long hair* (P. 210)

To lead a score of goats, followed by half a hundred sheep, to the mountains, was not a difficult task; two good dogs did the hardest part of the work; there was no risk of being beaten for clumsiness, and there would be no stint of milk and cheese; and if the farmer did not give a para, at least he allowed Eyes' Delight to take as much wool as she could spin to make her own and her father's clothes. Ali, who had only the alternative of dying of hunger or being hanged, had not much difficulty in deciding to lead a patriarchal life. The very

next day he made a beginning, and went off to the mountains with his daughter, and the dogs, and the flock of sheep.

Once in the meadows, Ali relapsed into his natural indolent habits; lying down and smoking his pipe, he spent his time in watching the birds wheeling in the air. Poor Eyes' Delight was not so patient; she thought of Bagdad, and her distaff did not make her forget the happy days that were past.

"Father," she often said, "what is life worth if it is only one long misery? Would it not be better to have done with it at once than to die by inches?"

"Allah is great, my daughter," replied the wise shepherd. "What he does is well done. I have rest in my old age, and that is the best thing one can have; so, as you see, I resign myself. Ah, if only I had learned some trade. As for you, you have youth and hope; you can afford to await the return of fortune. What a consolation that ought to be to you."

"I am resigned, dear father," said Eyes' Delight, with a sigh, but she was the less resigned because she hoped the more.

Ali had led this peaceful life in solitude for over a year, when one morning the son of the Pashaw of Damascus went hunting in the mountains. In the pursuit of a wounded bird he lost his way. Alone and separated from his attendants, he tried to regain his road by following the course of a stream as it descended the mountain, when in rounding a rock he suddenly caught sight of a young girl, who, seated on the grass with her feet dangling in the water, was plaiting her long hair.

At the sight of this lovely creature a cry escaped Yousouf.

Eyes' Delight raised her eyes, and alarmed at seeing a stranger, fled to her father and disappeared from the gaze of the astonished prince.

"Who is that?" thought Yousouf. "The mountain flower is sweeter and fresher than our garden roses. This daughter of the desert is more beautiful than our sultanas. She is the wife of my dreams."

He followed the footsteps of the mysterious maiden as fast as the stones permitted him. At length he found Eyes' Delight busy milking the goats, while Ali called off the dogs, whose furious barking gave notice of the arrival of a stranger. Yousouf told them how he had lost his way, and was dying of thirst. Eyes' Delight quickly brought him a great earthen vessel full of milk; he drank slowly; without speaking a word he looked at father and daughter, and at last made up his mind to ask his way. Ali, followed by his two dogs, conducted the sportsman to the foot of the mountain, and then returned trembling in every limb. The stranger

had given him a piece of gold, so he must needs be someone about the court, or perhaps a pashaw. According to Ali, who judged others by himself, a pashaw was a man who could only do evil, and whose friendship was not less to be feared than his enmity.

On arriving at Damascus Yousouf hastened to his mother, and, throwing his arms round her neck, he assured her she was as lovely as she was at sixteen, and as brilliant as the full moon; that she was his only friend, and the only person he loved in the wide world; and saying this, he kissed her hand again and again.

His mother smiled.

"My son," she said, "you have something to confide to me; speak out. I do not know if I am as beautiful as you say, but I do know that you cannot have a truer friend than your mother."

Yousouf required no pressing; he longed to tell all he had seen in the mountains; he drew a marvellous picture of the lovely stranger, declared he could not live without her, and that he would marry her the very next day.

"Have a little patience, my son," his mother repeated; "let us learn who this miracle of beauty is, and after that we will consult your father and gain his consent to this happy union."

When the pashaw heard of his son's passion, he began by protesting, and finished by getting in a rage.

"Was there any lack at Damascus of rich and beautiful heiresses, that he should go into the desert to find a girl who was a shepherdess? Never would he consent to such a dreadful marriage. Never!"

Never is a word a wise man should never make use of when his wife and son are in league against him. Before eight days had elapsed the pashaw, moved by the tears of the mother and the silence and pale face of the son, yielded, tired of the conflict. But like a strong man, and one who respects himself, he declared that he was doing a foolish thing, and that he knew it.

"Be it so," said he; "let my son marry the shepherdess, and let his folly return upon his own head. I

wash my hands of the whole concern. But that nothing shall be wanting to this absurd union, let my buffoon be called. He is the most suitable person to go and fetch this wretched shepherdess, who has cast a spell over my house."

An hour later the hunchback, astride upon an ass, was on his way to the mountain, cursing the pashaw's caprice and Yousouf's falling in love. Was there any sense in sending a delicate man, born to live under the roof of a palace, whose wit was the delight of princes and nobles, on an embassy to a shepherd? But alas! fortune is blind, it raises fools to eminence, and reduces to the trade of a buffoon the man of genius who does not wish to die of starvation.

Three fatiguing days had not soothed the hunchback's ill-humour when he descried Ali reposing under the shade of a locust tree, and more occupied with his pipe than his sheep. The buffoon set spurs to his ass, and approached the shepherd with the dignity of a grand vizier.

"You rascal," said he, "you have bewitched the pashaw's son! He does you the honour of demanding your daughter's hand in marriage. Clean up this mountain pearl as quickly as possible; I must take her back with me to Damascus. As to you, the pashaw sends you this purse, and commands you to leave the country as soon as possible."

Ali allowed the purse to drop which was thrown at him, and, without turning his head, asked the hunchback what he wanted.

"Rude fellow," replied the latter, "did you not hear me? The pashaw's son is going to marry your daughter."

"What does the pashaw's son do?" said Ali.

"What does he do?" the hunchback exclaimed, bursting out laughing. "You double-dyed idiot, do you imagine that such a lofty personage is a boor like yourself? Do you not know that the pashaw divides with the Sultan the taxes of the province, and that out of the forty sheep you take such bad care of four belong to him of right, and thirty-six he can take if he chooses?"

"I did not speak of the pashaw," quietly returned Ali; "may Allah preserve his highness! I ask you what his son does! Is he an armourer?"

"No, stupid."

"Is he a blacksmith?"

"Certainly not."

"A carpenter?"

"No."

"A lime-burner?"

"No, no. He is a great noble. Do you not understand, thrice-dozed fool! It is only common people who work. A pashaw's son is a noble—that is to say, he has white hands and does nothing."

"Then he cannot have my daughter," said the shepherd, gravely. "Housekeeping is expensive, and I will never give my child to a husband who cannot support his wife. But perhaps the pashaw's son has some trade less rough than those I mentioned. Perhaps he is an embroiderer?"

"No," replied the hunchback, shrugging his shoulders.

"Tailor?"

"No."

"Potter?"

"No."

"Basket-maker?"

"No."

"Then he is a barber?"

"No," said the hunchback, purple with rage. "Have done with this stupid joke or I will beat you unmercifully. Call your daughter. I am in haste."

"My daughter will not go with you," answered the shepherd.

He whistled to his dogs, who came up growling and showing their teeth in a way that only moderately pleased the pashaw's emissary.

He remounted his ass, and shaking his fist at Ali, who was holding back his dogs, bristling with rage—

"Rascal," he cried, "you will soon hear of me! You will learn the cost of setting up your own will against that of the pashaw who is your and my master."

The buffoon returned to Damascus with his half ear lower than usual. Luckily for him the pashaw took the whole affair in good part. It was a slight check to his wife

and son, while it was a triumph for him self; a double success which tickled his pride very agreeably.

"Really," he said, "the worthy man is a still greater fool than my son; but be tranquil, Yousouf, a pashaw's word is to be depended on. I am going to send four horsemen to the mountains who will bring back the daughter. As to the father, do not worry yourself; I have an unanswerable argument for him." And so saying, he cheerfully made a gesture with his hand as if he were cutting down something in front of him which annoyed him.

On a sign from his mother, Yousouf rose and implored his father to leave to him the trouble of bringing this little business to a successful termination. No doubt the means he proposed were irresistible; but Eyes' Delight was probably fond of her father, she would cry, and the pashaw would be sorry to sadden the first bright days of a marriage. Yousouf hoped that with a little gentleness he should easily overcome an opposition which did not seem to him serious.

"Very well," said the pashaw. "You think you are cleverer than your father; that is always the way with sons. Do as you like; but I warn you that from to-day I shall not take any further trouble in your affairs. If this old fool of a shepherd refuses you, that will be your look out. I would give a thousand piasters to see you come back looking as foolish as the hunchback."

Ali received Yousouf with all the respect due to the pashaw's son. He thanked him heartily for his honourable proposal, but he was not in any way to be moved to change his mind. No trade, no marriage! It was for him to take it or leave it. The young man counted on Eyes' Delight coming to his aid; but Eyes' Delight was not visible, and the very good reason why she did not disobey her father was that the prudent Ali had not told her one word about the proposed marriage. Ever since the hunchback's visit he had carefully kept her in the house.

Crestfallen, the pashaw's son descended the mountain. What was he to do? Return to Damascus to be the butt of his father's raillery? Never would Yousouf resign himself to that! Lose Eyes' Delight? Death, rather than that!

Make that obstinate old shepherd change his mind? Yousouf could not hope for such success, and he almost regretted that he had failed by his gentleness.

In the midst of these sad reflections he noticed that his horse, which he had left to its own devices, had strayed. Yousouf found himself on the verge of a wood of olive trees. In the distance was a village, where the blue smoke curled over the roofs, and the barking of dogs was to be heard, the song of workmen, and the noise of the hammer and anvil.

An idea occurred to Yousouf. What was there to prevent him learning a trade? Was not Eyes' Delight worth any sacrifice? The young man tied up his horse to an olive tree, and hung on it his weapons, his embroidered jacket, and turban. At the first house in the village he complained of having been robbed by the Bedouins, bought some common clothes, and, disguised in this way, he went from door to door offering himself as an apprentice.

Yousouf's appearance was so prepossessing that everyone received him cordially; but the conditions frightened him. The blacksmith required two years to teach him his business, the potter one year, the mason six months; why, it was a century! The pashaw's son could not make up his mind to such a long apprenticeship, when he heard a squeaky voice calling him.

"Hallo, my son," it cried, "if you are in a hurry, and have no ambition, come along with me; in a week I will teach you to gain your own livelihood."

Yousouf raised his head. A few steps in front of him a fat little man was sitting on a bench, with crossed legs and a merry, jovial face. He was a basket-maker, and round him were strewn straw and rushes dyed all colours. With deft hand he was plaiting the straw, which he then sewed to make into baskets, hampers, mats, and hats of different shapes and shades. It was a pleasant sight.

"You shall be my master," said Yousouf, grasping the basket-maker's hand; "and if you can teach me your trade in two days, I will pay you well for your trouble. Here is the earnest money."

So saying, he threw a couple of gold pieces to the astonished workman.

An apprentice who throws gold about so profusely is not a sight to be seen every day, and the basket-maker never doubted but that he had to do with a prince in disguise, so he did wonders. And as his pupil was not wanting in intelligence and willingness to learn, before evening he had taught him all the secrets of his trade.

"My son," he said, "your education is finished. You shall judge for yourself whether your master has earned his money. The sun is setting, and everyone now leaves off work and goes past my door. Take the mat that you have plaited and sewn with your own hands and offer it to the passers-by. If I am not very much mistaken, you will get four paras for it, and that for a first attempt is a nice little sum."

The basket-maker was not mistaken; the first customer offered three paras, and Yousouf demanded five, and an hour was spent in discussion and screaming, till the customer decided on giving four. He drew out his long purse, looked several times at the mat, criticised it, and at last made up his mind to pay his four copper pieces one after the other. But instead of taking the money, Yousouf gave a gold piece to the customer, counted out ten to the basket-maker, and carrying off with him his piece of work, left the village at full speed like a madman. On reaching the place where he had tied up his horse, he spread his mat on the ground, enveloped his head in his burnous, and slept. It was a broken sleep, yet the sweetest he had ever known in his life.

At daybreak, when Ali went with his sheep to the pasturage, he was much surprised to see Yousouf already installed before him under the old carob-tree. As soon as he caught sight of the shepherd, the young man rose, and taking up the mat on which he was lying—

"My father," he said, "you have required me to learn a trade and I have done so; this is my work, examine it."

"It is very nice," said Ali. "If it is not very well plaited, it is honestly sewn. How much can you gain a day by making a mat like that?"



The basket-maker taught him all the secrets of his trade
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"Four paras," said Yousouf; "and with a little practice I should make two in less than a day."

"Let us be modest," replied Ali; "modesty is becoming in a beginner. Four paras a day is not much, but four paras to-day and four paras to-morrow, that makes eight paras, and four more the day after make twelve paras. In short, it is a trade by which a man can get a living; and if I had had the sense to learn it when I was pashaw I should never have been reduced to become a shepherd."

At these words Yousouf was extremely astonished. Then Ali told him his whole history; it was at the risk of losing his head, but a little pride may be forgiven to a father. In giving him his daughter, Ali was not sorry for the opportunity of letting his future son-in-law know that Eyes' Delight was not an unworthy bride for the son of a pashaw.

That day the sheep were led home before the right time, for Yousouf wanted to thank the honest farmer himself for his kindness to poor Ali and his daughter. He gave him a purse filled with gold to reward him for his charity. A man is never so liberal as when he is happy.

Eyes' Delight, on being presented to the sportsman, and being told of Yousouf's proposals, declared that a daughter's first duty was to obey her father. In similar cases, it is said, daughters are very obedient in Turkey.

The same day, in the cool of the evening, they started for Damascus. Their horses were light and their hearts lighter still, and they went like the wind. Before the close of the second day they had reached their journey's end. Yousouf presented his betrothed to his mother. How delighted the Sultana was it is unnecessary to say. After the first embraces were over she could not resist the pleasure of showing her husband that she was cleverer than he was, so she disclosed to him the birth of the lovely Eyes' Delight.

"By Allah!" cried the pashaw, stroking his long beard in order to put a good face on the matter and hide his confusion. "You think, madam, that you can surprise a statesman like myself? As if I should have consented to this match if I had not known all along the secret that so

surprises you! Are you not aware that a pashaw knows everything?"

And that very instant he went into his study to write to the Sultan to inquire his will concerning Ali. He had no wish to offend his Highness for the sake of the *beaux yeux* of a proscribed family. Youth loves romance in life, but the pashaw was a man of the world, who intended to live and die a pashaw.

All sultans are fond of being told stories, if we may believe the *Arabian Nights*. Ali's former protector was no unworthy descendant of the old stock. He sent a ship to Syria on purpose to fetch the ex-governor of Bagdad to Constantinople. Ali, clad in rags, and crook in hand, was conducted to the Seraglio, and there, before a numerous audience, had the honour of amusing his master a whole evening.

When Ali had finished his narrative, the Sultan put upon him the robe of honour. His Highness had turned him from a pashaw into a shepherd, and now, determined to astonish the world by a fresh display of his power, from a shepherd he turned Ali into a pashaw.

At this striking proof of favour the whole court applauded. Ali, however, threw himself at the Sultan's feet, and declined an honour which had no attraction for him. He said he had no wish to risk displeasing the master of the world a second time, and he only asked to be allowed to go down to his grave in obscurity, blessing the generous hand that had brought him up from the abyss into which he had justly fallen.

Ali's boldness alarmed the court, but the Sultan smiled.

"Allah is great!" he exclaimed, "and every day provides us with a fresh surprise. In my reign of twenty years this is the first time that one of my subjects has begged to be nothing. On account of the rarity of the fact, Ali, I grant you your request. All I insist upon is that you accept this gift of a thousand purses.¹ Nobody is allowed to leave me empty-handed."

¹About £12,000.

On his return to Damascus Ali bought a beautiful garden full of orange and lemon trees, apricots, plums, and grapes, in which it was his delight to dig and weed and graft and prune and water. Every evening he lay down tired in body, but with a contented mind, and every morning he rose up rested and refreshed, with an agile body and a light heart.

Eyes' Delight had three sons, all more beautiful than their mother, and the aged Ali undertook their education. To all of them he taught gardening, and each he apprenticed to a different trade. To impress upon their hearts the truths that he had understood for the first time when he was in exile, Ali had inscribed on the walls of his house and garden the finest passages from the Koran, and below these he had placed the following wise maxims, which the Prophet himself would not have disowned:

“Work is the true riches which never fail. Make use of thine hands in work and thou wilt never stretch them forth in beggary. When thou knowest what it costs to earn one para, thou wilt respect the property and the labour of thy fellow-man. Work gives health, wisdom, and happiness. Work and *ennui* dwell not together.”

Surrounded by these sage precepts the three sons of Eyes' Delight grew up to man's estate. They all became pashaws, and one cannot help wondering if they profited by their grandfather's maxims. I like to believe that they did, although the annals of Turkey are silent on the subject.

THE MYSTERIOUS GARDEN

ONCE upon a time, there was a very powerful king, very wise, and very just. This king had sent out a law in all his kingdom that no one should have rewards, employment, or honours, if they had not merited them by service to king or country, and the reward must be according to merit.

In the course of time there were born at the court three children of the blood royal. They grew up rich in virtue and talent, handsome, well-made, amiable, dear and esteemed by all. The king, who loved them, and wished to give them rank according to their merit, said to them one day: "My children, I wish to give you all the honours and rewards possible. I wish to place you in a higher position than any that is in my palace, for you have found favour in my eyes, and I believe you capable of all virtues. But everyone knows, and you know, that there is a law in my kingdom that I cannot violate. I can confer neither honours nor employment on anyone except in return for services. It is not then by remaining at the court that you will gain the rank that I destine for you. Go, then, I advise you, travel round all the kingdom, and seek to merit by your exploits the reward the law promises, and that I desire to give you. You can return to the court when I recall you. Until then, keep the notes of all you do, for according to your merit will the reward be."

The three young men felt great regret at quitting the court, but the king had spoken, and it was necessary to obey. All three took leave of the king and embarked one lovely day, leaving to chance the course they should take.

They were far from court when they disembarked on an island which, seen from the sea, looked very fertile and



He found in a corner an abundance of gold and silver

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charming. In the midst of the island they found a beautiful garden, full of fruit, but, when they approached it, three guardians met them, and while permitting them to enter, each one gave a piece of advice.

The first guardian said that they must remember that they could not remain always in this garden. A moment would come when they would be obliged to leave it. All who had preceded them had been obliged to go. Such was the rule. Some entered, the others left.

The second guardian told them that they must engrave on their memories the fact that as they entered so would they leave the garden. They were free to enjoy all in the enclosure; no one would interfere; but in going out they were forbidden to carry anything away.

The third guardian recommended them to be moderate in their tastes and their pleasures, and only to do things good and honest, adding that this conduct would help much to prolong their lives.

After having heard these sage counsels the three young people entered the garden. It was more rich and beautiful than they had judged from a distance. One found there an abundance of trees loaded with fruit, and plants and flowers as agreeable to smell as to see. The nightingales sang in the shade of the great oaks, and throngs of birds charmed the air with their melodious concerts. A sound of running water brought a sense of freshness and life.

It is needless to describe the joy of the three friends. They ate the excellent fruits, they drank the delicious water, they slept in the shade of the thick trees, listening to the nightingales, while the breeze gently stirred the leaves and brought to them the penetrating odour of the flowers.

At the end of a little time they separated. Each one had chosen the side of the garden that pleased him best.

Seduced by the beauty of the fruits and the freshness of the water, the first of these three youths thought only of present pleasure. To drink, eat, sleep, lead a joyous life, and want for nothing, such was his only thought. He forgot altogether the counsels that the three guardians had given them.

It was neither the fruits nor the flowers that had

charmed the second young man. He had found in a corner an abundance of gold and silver and precious stones. Dazzled by these treasures, he thought of nothing but amassing them. He made as many pockets as possible in his clothes to store up his wealth. This was his whole idea. He did not eat, drink, or sleep. As to using the garden and its pleasures, he did not dream of it for a moment, forgetting that the second guardian had said that they must enjoy all they found during their stay, and keep nothing, for they could carry nothing out.

The third young man had engraven on his memory all that the three guardians had said, and he did not do like his companions. The course they had taken appeared to him evil and dangerous. It was not in such ways that they could win their honours. This young man, then, used the garden and its pleasures, but only so far as was necessary to sustain life. He employed his time in studying the place and all in it. In examining these fruits and flowers, these animals in their wonderful variety, in finding out the properties of each plant, he admired the perpetual miracle of nature. In following the course of the waters so well distributed by degrees from sod to sod so that every plant would be watered, he could not but admire the wonderful order which put everything in its place.

What added to his astonishment was that in this garden so well ordered there was no gardener ever seen. But reflection taught him that such perfect order could not be by accident, and that there was certainly a very wise gardener, an invisible master who governed this beautiful domain. Each day added to his admiration, and each day added to his desire to know the master of the garden. He sought him everywhere, and without having seen him, he loved him for giving him the pleasure of the sight and study of such wonders.

While each one of the three young people governed themselves in perfect liberty, there came a messenger from the king, who gave them an order to return at once to the court to render an account of their lives. Each one set out and reached the gate by which they had entered. But the

first of these young men, who had dreamed only of enjoyment, felt himself affected by the change of air, and not having the fruit of the garden to sustain him, his strength left him and he fell on the earth and died.

The second one went with slow steps loaded like a mule. The hope of one day enjoying his silver made him forget fatigue. But when he arrived at the gate the guardians,



*He was so fatigued and miserable that he could not keep
on his feet (P. 228)*

astonished at seeing his heavy steps, seized him and took all from him in an instant. The unhappy one began to groan and weep. All his work, all his pains had only brought him misery and despair. On hearing the voice of the messenger who called him by the order of the king, the third felt a lively joy. He would without doubt see this master whom he had sought ere he left the garden. He

could at last show his gratitude and love. For the rest he had never offended him, far from that; he had done all to recognize his will and obey it. It was with a heart full of hope, and carrying nothing with him, that this young man hastened to the gate of the garden. He was well received by the guardians, happy to see with what zeal he obeyed the orders of the king.

In approaching the court, the one who had been despoiled of his treasures was so fatigued and miserable that he could not keep on his feet. In vain he cried out that he was of royal blood. No one put faith in his words. More than this, the slaves of the court, indignant that such a beggar dared to claim relationship with the king, shut the gates of the palace and threw him into a prison cell, where he had time to expiate his faults and weep for his folly.

His companion was well received. All the great ones of the court ran to meet him, and embrace him, and to do him honour they accompanied him to the hall where the king waited. The king was rejoiced at seeing the young man so calm and happy, and although he knew everything, he asked the new-comer what he had done since he had been gone.

The young man related to the king all that he had remarked of beauty and grandeur in the delicious garden where he had lived, and he added: "I am sure now that this garden has a very wise master. This master cannot be far, though he took pleasure in concealing himself, and all my desire is to show him the thankfulness and love that a sight of his works inspire."

Then the king said to him: "Since you have employed your life so well, I will grant your desire. It is I who am the master of this garden. It is I who govern it from here by my ministers. There is no beast so little, no plant so humble, that it has not a servant to take care of it and make it grow."

In comprehending this mystery and hearing these words, the happy being felt the love he bore this master grow greater. He tasted an infinite joy in knowing him, and lived on at the court with all the honours he merited.

ARE YOU NOT SATISFIED?
OR
THE TALE OF THE NOSES
(A BOHEMIAN STORY)



Coranda

AT Dewitz, in the suburbs of Prague, there was once upon a time a rich and eccentric farmer, with a pretty daughter, whom he greatly wished to see married. The students at Prague, who at that time numbered five and twenty thousand, often went to Dewitz, and many would gladly have driven a plough to become the farmer's son-in-law. But how could it be managed? The first condition that the cunning peasant imposed upon each new farm-servant that came to him was this: "I engage you for a year, that is to say, until the cuckoo again announces the return of spring: if between now and then you once tell me that you are not satisfied, I will cut off the end of your nose. For the rest," he added, laughing, "I will give you the same right over my nose." He kept his word, and Prague was filled with students the ends of whose noses had been cut off and stuck on again. This, of course, did not prevent them from being scarred, and caused endless jokes at the sufferers' expense. To return from Dewitz disfigured and ridiculous was enough to cool their ardour.

A certain young man named Coranda, rather heavy-looking, but cool, sharp, and knowing, which is not a bad combination of qualities for making a fortune, was anxious to try his luck.

The farmer received him with his ordinary good-nature, and, the usual bargain being concluded, sent him to work in his fields. At breakfast-time the other farm-labourers were called, but our friend was carefully overlooked, and at dinner the same thing happened again. Coranda did not put himself out, however; he returned to the house, and while the farmer's wife was feeding the fowls, unhooked an enormous ham from the kitchen rafters, took a great loaf from the cupboard, and went off to the fields afterward to dine and have a nap.

When he came home in the evening, the farmer called out to him—

“Are you not satisfied?”

“Quite satisfied,” replied Coranda. “I have dined better than you have.”

Hereupon the farmer's wife came running toward them, crying out, “Thief! thief!” and our friend laughed, while the farmer grew pale.

“Are *you* not satisfied?” said Coranda.

“A ham is only a ham,” returned the master. “I do not vex myself about a trifle.”

But after that they took care not to leave our student fasting.

When Sunday came the farmer and his wife drove to church in a cart; and said to the new farm-servant before they started—

“You will see after the dinner. Put that piece of meat into the pot, and add some onions, carrots, and parsley.”

“All right,” said Coranda.

Now there was a charming little dog at the farm called Parsley; Coranda killed it, skinned it, and boiled it in the broth. When the farmer's wife returned, she called her favourite; but, alas! she only found its skin hanging in the window.

“What have you done?” she asked Coranda.

"What you ordered me, mistress. I have put onions, carrots, and Parsley into the pot," he said.

"Malicious fool!" cried the farmer. "Have you had the heart to kill that little innocent creature, which was the pet of the house?"

"Are you not satisfied?" said Coranda, drawing his knife from his pocket.

"I do not say so," replied the good man, sighing. "A dead dog is only a dead dog."

Some days later the farmer and his wife went to market. As they mistrusted their terrible servant, they said to him—

"You are to remain in the house. Do nothing out of your own head, but do exactly what the others do."

"All right!" rejoined Coranda.

Now there was an old shed in the yard, the roof of which threatened to fall in. While the farmer and his wife were away, some masons came to repair it, and, according to their wont, began by demolishing it. Lo and behold! Coranda took a ladder, mounted upon the roof of the farmhouse, which was quite new, and scattered to the winds shingles, rafters, nails, cramp-irons, and all.

When the farmer returned the house was roofless.

"Fellow," he exclaimed, "what new trick is this you have played me?"

"I obeyed you, master, for you told me to do as the others did. Are you not satisfied?" replied Coranda, drawing his knife.

"Satisfied," said the farmer, "satisfied, why should I be dissatisfied? Some laths more or less will not ruin me," he added with a sigh.

That evening the farmer and his wife said to each other that it was high time to get rid of Coranda. As they were sensible people, they never did anything without consulting their daughter, it being customary in Bohemia for children to have more wit than their parents.

"Father," said Helen, "I will hide myself very early to-morrow morning in the big pear-tree, and I will imitate the cuckoo. You will say to Coranda that the year is passed,

since the cuckoo is singing; then you can pay him and send him off."

No sooner said than done. From early morning was heard the plaintive cry of the herald of spring, "Cuckoo, cuckoo!"

No one could have appeared more surprised than the farmer.

"Now then, my boy," he said to Coranda, "here is spring come back again. The cuckoo is singing in the pear-tree down there. Come, and I will pay you your wages, and we will separate, good friend."

"A cuckoo!" returned Coranda. "I have never seen that bird," and running to the tree he shook it with all his might, when, lo! a young girl fell from the tree, who fortunately was more frightened than hurt.

"Villain!" cried the farmer.

"Are you not satisfied?" asked Coranda, drawing his knife.

"Wretch! you kill my daughter, and you ask me if I am satisfied. I am mad with anger. Go, if you do not wish to perish by my hand."

"I will not go until I have cut off your nose," said Coranda, "I have kept my word, now it is for you to keep yours."

"Hold," cried the farmer, putting his hand before his face. "Will you let me ransom my nose?"

"Be it so," said Coranda.

"Will you have ten sheep?" offered the farmer.

"No," replied Coranda.

"Two oxen?" said the farmer.

"No," repeated the student.

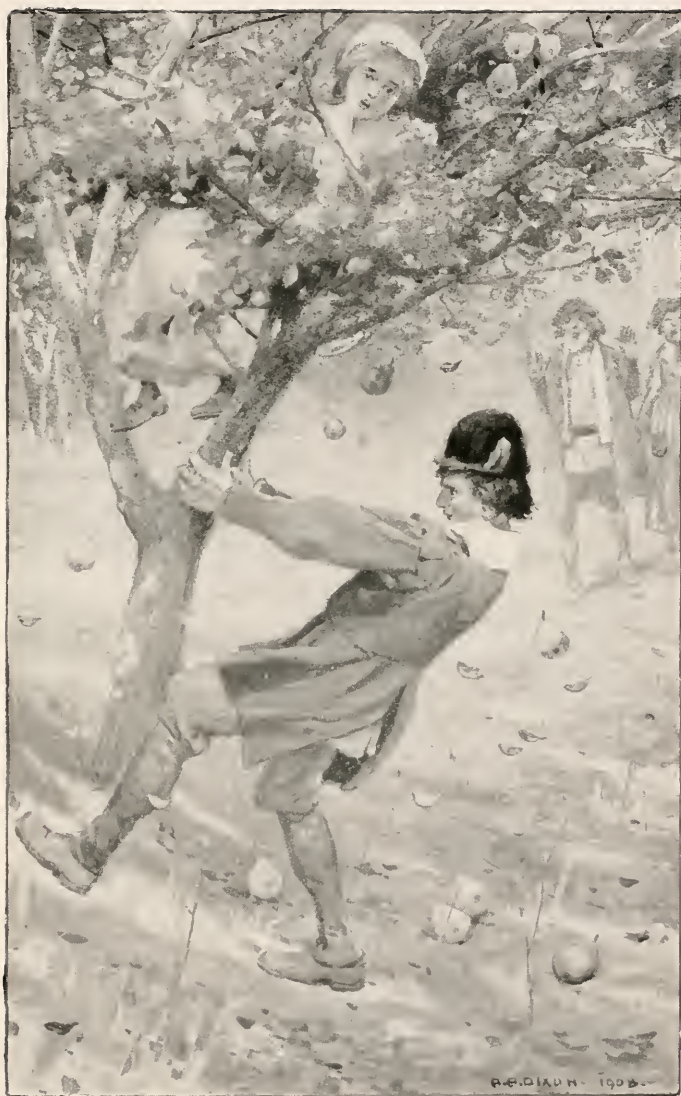
"Ten cows?"

"No, I prefer to cut off your nose," said Coranda, sharpening his knife on the doorstep of the house.

"Father," said Helen, "it was my fault, and I will repair it. Coranda, will you accept my hand instead of my father's nose?"

"Yes," answered Coranda.

"I only make one condition," added the young girl.



Running to the tree, Coranda shook it with all his might
(P. 232)

"The first of us who is not satisfied with our wedded life is to have his or her nose cut off."

"Very good," returned Coranda. "I should have preferred that it should be the tongue; but we can come to that after the nose."

Never was a grander wedding at Dewitz, and never a happier home. Coranda and the beautiful Helen were a pattern couple; neither the husband nor the wife was ever heard to complain of each other. They loved each other with daggers drawn, and thanks to their ingenious contract, they preserved during a long union both their mutual love and their noses.

THE TWELVE MONTHS

(A BOHEMIAN STORY)

ONCE upon a time there was a peasant woman, left a widow with two children. The elder of the two, who was her stepdaughter, was called Dobrunka, and the second, who was as wicked as her mother, was called Zloboga. The widow adored her own daughter, but she hated Dobrunka, simply because the latter was as beautiful as her own daughter was ugly. Good Dobrunka did not even know that she was pretty, so she could not understand why her stepmother always flew into a passion at the sight of her. The poor child did all the work of the house; she swept, cooked, washed and spun. She cut the grass, and tended the cow, while Zloboga lived like a princess, doing nothing all day long.

Dobrunka worked with all her heart, and received with the gentleness of a lamb the reproaches and blows that were heaped upon her; but nothing disarmed her stepmother, for every day added to her beauty and to the ugliness of her sister.

"Now they are both grown up," thought the widow, "suitors will soon appear, but they will never look at my daughter when they see that hateful Dobrunka, who every day grows more beautiful to spite me. I must get rid of her at all risks."

One day in the middle of January, Zloboga longed for some violets.

"Come, Dobrunka," said she, "go and fetch me a bunch of violets from the woods, and I will put them in my sash, where I can smell them."

"Good Heavens, sister, what an idea!" answered



On each skin sat a motionless Agave.

Dobrunka; "do you think that violets are to be found under the snow?"

"Be silent, stupid," replied the younger girl; "do as I tell you. If you do not go to the woods and bring me a bunch of violets, I will beat you black and blue."

The mother took Dobrunka's arm and pushing her out of the house, double-locked the door upon her.

The poor girl went crying to the woods; everything was covered with snow, there was not even a footpath. Soon she lost her way, and shivering with cold and hunger, she prayed to be released from her misery.

Suddenly she descried a light in the distance, and hastening toward it, gained the summit of a rock. There she found a great fire, round which were twelve great stones, and on each stone sat a motionless figure enveloped in a long cloak, the hood of which covered the head and fell down to the eyes. Three of these cloaks were white like snow; three green like grass; three, the colour of ripe corn; and three, purple like bunches of grapes. The twelve figures that were gazing at the fire in silence were the twelve months of the year. Dobrunka recognized January by his long white beard, and he alone had a stick in his hand. The poor girl was very much frightened, but she drew near, saying, in a timid voice—

"Good sirs, allow me to warm myself at your fire; I am frozen."

January made a sign with his head. "Why do you come here, my girl?" said he; "what do you seek?"

"I was looking for violets," answered Dobrunka.

"This is not the season; there are no violets when the snow is on the ground," said January, in his big loud voice.

"I know it," sadly replied Dobrunka; "but my sister and my mother will beat me black and blue if I do not bring some back. Pray, gentlemen, will you tell me where I can find any?"

Old January rose up, and turning to a young man with a green hood, put his stick into his hand.

"Brother March," he said, "this is your affair."

March rose up in his turn and stirred the fire with the

stick. At once the flame blazed up, the snow melted, the buds reddened on the boughs, the grass grew green at the foot of the bushes, and the ground was carpeted with violets, as in springtime.

"Quick, my child, gather your violets," said March.

Dobrunka picked a large bouquet, and having thanked the twelve months, ran joyfully home. Nobody could have been more astonished than Zloboga and her mother were. The scent of the violets perfumed the house.



March stirred the fire with the stick (P. 237)

"Where did you find these beautiful things?" asked Zloboga, sneering.

"Up yonder on the mountain," replied her sister. "There was a great carpet of them under the bushes."

Zloboga placed the bunch in her sash, and did not even say "thank you" to the poor child.

The next day the wicked girl, seated idly by the stove, thought she would like some strawberries, so she told her

sister to go and find her some in the woods. Dobrunka objected that strawberries were not to be found under the snow, but Zloboga screamed—

“Be silent, idiot, and do as I tell you. If you do not go to the wood, and bring me back a basket of strawberries, I will beat you black and blue.”

Again her stepmother locked poor Dobrunka out, and the unhappy girl took her way to the wood. Looking hard for the light she had seen the day before, she was fortunate enough to descry it, and she soon reached the fire, trembling and frozen, where the twelve months were seated in the same places as before, motionless and silent.

“Good sirs,” she said, “allow me to warm myself by your fire: I am frozen with cold.”

“Why have you returned?” inquired January. “What do you want?”

“I am looking for strawberries,” answered Dobrunka.

“This is not the season,” returned January in his loud voice; “there are no strawberries under the snow.”

“I know that,” replied Dobrunka, sadly; “but my mother and sister will beat me cruelly if I do not take some back. Pray, good sirs, tell me where I can find any?”

Old January rose up, and turning to a man in a gold-coloured hood, handed him his stick.

“Brother June,” said he, “this is your affair.”

June rose in his turn and stirred the fire with the stick. Up blazed the flame, the snow melted, the earth grew green, the trees were covered with leaves, the birds sang, and it was summer. Thousands of little white stars enamelled the grass, then they changed into strawberries, and soon the strawberries shone in their green calyxes like rubies in the midst of emeralds.

“Make haste, my child, and gather your strawberries,” said June.

Dobrunka filled her apron, and having thanked the twelve months, ran joyfully home.

Imagine the astonishment of Zloboga and her mother when the scent of the strawberries perfumed the house.

"Where did you find these fine things?" asked Zloboga, contemptuously.

"On the mountain," answered her sister, "and there are so many that the ground is quite red with them."

Zloboga and her mother ate the strawberries without even thanking the poor child.

The third day the wicked sister fancied she would like some rosy apples. Again the same threats, the same insults, and the same violence. Dobrunka ran to the mountain, and was fortunate enough to find once more her friends, the twelve good months, who were warming themselves in silence.

"What! come back again, my child?" said old January, making room for her at the fire.

And Dobrunka told him, with tears in her eyes, that if she did not take home with her some rosy apples, her mother and sister would beat her to death.

Good January went again through the ceremonies of the day before.

"Brother September," said he to a graybeard in a purple hood, "you must see after this."

September, then rising, stirred the fire with the stick till it blazed up, and the snow melted, and the trees put forth some yellow leaves, which fell one by one at a breath of wind. It was autumn. A few late carnations and daisies and everlastings were all the flowers to be seen; but Dobrunka never heeded them, she saw but one thing, and that was an apple-tree with its ruddy fruit.

"Make haste, my child, and shake the tree," said September.

She shook it, and one apple fell down; and a second time she shook it, and another apple fell.

"Quick, Dobrunka, make haste home," cried September, in a commanding voice. Relieved and happy, she thanked the twelve months, and ran quickly home.

Zloboga and her mother were extremely astonished.

"What!" cried Zloboga, "fresh apples in January! Where did you find them?"

"Up yonder on the mountain," replied Dobrunka. "There is a tree there as red as a cherry-tree in July."

"Why did you only bring me two apples?" rejoined her sister. "I am sure you have eaten the others on the way."

"I have not taken any, sister. I was only allowed to shake the tree twice, and only two apples fell down."

"Get away," cried Zloboga, and she struck her sister, who ran away crying.

The wicked girl then tasted one of the two apples, and thought she had never tasted any with so fine a flavour. Her mother was of the same opinion. What a pity not to have more of them!

"Mother," said Zloboga, "give me my pelisse, and I will go to the wood and find the tree. Whether I am allowed or not, I will give it such a good shake that I shall bring all the apples down."

Her mother wished to speak to her; but a spoiled child listens to nobody. She wrapped herself in her fur pelisse, drew the hood over her head, and ran to the wood.

Dobrunka ran quickly home (P. 240) Everything was covered with snow, and there was no path to be seen. Zloboga soon lost her way, but greed and pride urged her onwards. At last she perceived a light in the distance, and running up the hill toward it, she found the twelve months each seated on his stone, silent and motionless. Without asking leave she approached the fire.

"What are you doing here? What do you want?" inquired January, dryly.

"What is that to you, old idiot?" answered Zloboga. "It is no business of yours where I come from and where I am going." And she plunged into the wood.

January knit his brows and raised his stick above his head. In a second the sky grew black with clouds, the fire died



down, the snow began to fall, and the wind howled dismally. Zloboga could no longer see before her, and, bewildered, sought in vain to return by the way she had come.

The snow fell thicker and thicker; she called aloud for her mother, and cursed her sister; and at last, frozen and despairing, she sank on the ground.

At home, her mother paced unceasingly from the window to the door, and from the door to the window. Hour after hour passed, but Zloboga did not return.

"I must go and find my daughter," she said. "The child must have lost her way in looking for those hateful apples."

The mother put on her pelisse and hood, and ran to the mountain. Faster and faster fell the snow as she plunged into the wood and called her daughter. Hurrying on with feverish anxiety, she called out again and again, while the snow fell thicker and thicker, and the wind wailed among the trees.

Dobrunka waited for them till evening, and then all night; but they never returned. In the morning she took her spinning-wheel, and spun a distaff full; but still no news.

"Good heavens! what can have happened?" thought the girl.

The sun was shining through the frosty fog, and the snow lay deep upon the ground. Dobrunka crossed herself, and murmured a prayer for her mother and sister.

They never came home; and it was spring-time when a shepherd found their two corpses in the wood!

Dobrunka was now sole mistress of the house, the cow, and the garden; and it was not long before a young farmer frankly offered her his hand and his heart. They were soon married. The twelve months did not abandon their *protégée*. More than once when the north wind blew too keenly, and the window-panes rattled in their leaden framework, the good man, January, stopped up all the chinks in the house with snow, so that the cold might not find an entrance into this peaceful habitation.

In this way Dobrunka lived a good and happy life, having, as the proverb says, "winter at the door, summer in the granary, autumn in the cellar, and spring in the heart."

THE GOLDEN LOAF

ONCE upon a time there was a widow who had a most beautiful daughter. The mother was humble and modest, but the daughter was pride itself. Suitors flocked from all parts, but none pleased her; the more they tried to do so, the more disdainful she became. One night her poor mother could not sleep, so she took her rosary from the wall and began to pray for the daughter who gave her so much anxiety. Marienka slept in the same bed, and while her mother was gazing fondly at her child's beauty, Marienka suddenly laughed in her sleep.

"What a delightful dream she must be having to laugh in that way!" thought the mother to herself.

Then she finished her prayer, replaced the rosary on the wall, and laying her head on the pillow beside her daughter, soon fell asleep. In the morning she said—

"Dear child, what pleasant dream was that you had last night to make you laugh so?"

"What did I dream, mother? Why, I dreamed that a lord came here for me, in a copper coach. He put a ring on my finger, the stones of which sparkled like the stars; and when I entered the church, people had only eyes for the Blessed Virgin and for me."

"My daughter, my daughter, what a proud dream!" said the poor mother, shaking her head. But Marienka left the room singing.

The same day a cart drove into the yard, and a handsome well-to-do young farmer came to ask Marienka to share with him peasant's fare. The suitor pleased the mother, but the proud Marienka rejected him with disdain, saying—

"Even if you were to come in a copper coach, and were to put a ring on my finger, the stones of which sparkled like the stars, I would not have you for a husband."

The young man withdrew, blaming Marienka's pride.

The following night the mother awoke, took down her rosary, and prayed still more fervently for her daughter; and again Marienka laughed aloud in her sleep.

"What can she be dreaming about?" thought the mother, who was praying, and could not sleep.

Next morning she said—

"Dear child, what were you dreaming of last night? You were laughing aloud in your sleep."

"Of what was I dreaming, mother?" answered Marienka. "I was dreaming that a lord came to fetch me in a silver coach, and offered me a gold diadem; and when I entered the church people paid less attention to the Blessed Virgin than to me."

"Be silent, my child, you are profane!" returned her mother. "Go down on your knees, my daughter, and pray to be kept from temptation."

But Marienka fled from the room to escape the sermon her mother was commencing.

The same day a carriage drove into the yard, and a young lord alighted. He came to beg Marienka to share with him the choicest fare.

"It is a great honour," said the mother. But vanity is blind.

"Even if you were to come in a silver coach," said Marienka, to the new aspirant, "and were to offer me a golden diadem, I would not have you for my husband."

"Take care, my daughter," said the poor mother, "pride will have a fall."

"Mothers do not know what they are talking about," thought Marienka, and she went out shrugging her shoulders.

The third night her mother was so uneasy she could not sleep at all, but prayed for her daughter.

Again Marienka burst out into a loud laugh.

"Good heavens! what can that unhappy girl be dreaming about?" cried the mother, who remained praying till the day dawned.

In the morning she said—

“Dear child, what were you dreaming of last night?”

“You will be angry,” answered Marienka.

“Tell me,” returned the mother; “always tell me.”

“I dreamed that a great lord came with a numerous suite to ask me in marriage. He was in a golden coach, and he brought me a gown of cloth of gold; and when I entered the church people only looked at *me*.”

Her mother crossed herself, while Marienka jumped down from the bed, and went into another room, half dressed, to escape the sermon that she dreaded.

The same day three carriages drove into the yard, one of copper, one of silver, and one of gold; the first with two horses, the second with four, and the third with eight, all caparisoned with gold and pearls. Pages in red hose and green jackets and waistcoats descended from the copper and silver coaches, while a grand-looking man all dressed in gold stepped out of the golden one.

He entered the house, and kneeling on one knee, asked the mother for her daughter's hand.

“What an honour!” thought the poor woman.

“Behold, my dream has come true,” cried Marienka. “You see, mother, that as usual I was right and you were wrong.”

She ran immediately to her room, put together some flowers in a bouquet, and smilingly offered it to the great nobleman in token of her troth. On his part, the lord slipped a ring on her finger, the stone of which sparkled like the stars, and offered her a diadem of gold and a gown of cloth of gold.

While the proud girl retired to dress herself for the ceremony, her anxious mother spoke thus to the bridegroom: “My good gentleman, what bread do you offer my daughter?”

“At my home,” he answered, “the bread is of copper, or silver, or gold. She can have her choice.”

“What does that mean?” thought the mother.

Marienka did not trouble herself about anything; she came back as radiant as the sun, and taking the hand of her betrothed set out for the church, without even asking

for her mother's blessing. The married couple left the poor woman praying in the church porch; and when Marienka stepped into the coach she never turned to look at her mother, nor thought of bidding her farewell.

The eight horses set off at once at a gallop, and did not stop until they reached an immense rock, in which there was a hole as big as the gate of a town. The horses plunged into the darkness, while the ground trembled beneath their feet. The bride, alarmed, seized her husband's hand.

"Fear nothing, beautiful one," said he, "we shall see daylight directly."

Suddenly a thousand torches waved round them, for the gnomes of the mountains, each with a torch in his hand, had come to greet their lord, the king of the mines.

Marienka knew then who her husband was. She cared not whether he were a good or an evil genius; at any rate he was rich, and she willingly accepted her new lot.

Emerging from the darkness, they drove through whitened forests at the foot of mountains which lifted their gloomy peaks far into the sky. Pines, beeches, birches, oaks, and rocks were all of lead. At the further end of the forest was a long meadow, where the grass was of silver, and in the middle stood a golden castle, encrusted with diamonds and rubies. Here the carriage drew up, and the king of the mines assisted his bride to alight, saying—

"My beautiful one, all this is yours!"

Marienka was enchanted; but one cannot travel so far without feeling hungry, so it was with pleasure that she watched the gnomes setting out a table on which shone gold, and crystal, and precious stones. Wonderful meats were served, *entrées* of emeralds, roast meats of gold on dishes of silver. Everyone ate with gusto, except the bride, who asked her husband for a little bread.

"Hand the copper loaf," said the king of the mines; but Marienka could not eat it.

"Hand the silver loaf," he said next: but Marienka could not eat it.

"Hand the golden loaf," he said at last, but neither could she eat that.

"My beautiful one," said the king of the mines, "I am sorry for it, but what can I offer you? We have no other kind of bread."

The bride burst into tears, but her husband roared with laughter, for his heart was of metal, like his kingdom.

"Cry if you like," he exclaimed, "that will not help



Marienka could not eat it (P. 246)

you. You have got what you wanted. Eat the bread that you have chosen."

So the rich Marienka remains in her castle, dying of hunger, and seeks in vain for roots to appease the craving that devours her. Heaven has granted her desire only to punish her. Once every year, in spring-time when the earth opens to the fertilizing rain, Marienka returns to the earth. Pale and faded, and clad in rags, she begs from door to door, thankful if only she is thrown some scraps and if she receives from some poor person a morsel of bread and a little of the pity that she lacks while in her golden palace.

PIFF-PAFF; OR, THE ART OF GOVERNMENT

(A TALE OF ALL LANDS)

CHAPTER I



Prince Charming

IN the kingdom of Thistledown—a happy country blessed by heaven, where men were always in the right and women never in the wrong, dwelt, a long time ago, a king, whose only thought was for the happiness of his people, and who, it was said, never felt bored or dull. It may be doubted whether he was beloved by his subjects, but that his courtiers had little respect for him and still less affection is very certain. They nicknamed him, Oddo, and by this name alone he is known in *The Great Chronicles of the Kingdoms and Princi-*

pality of the World of Nowhere.

King Oddo became a widower after a single year of wedded life, and thenceforth lavished all his affection upon his son and heir, who was the prettiest child ever seen. His complexion was like a rose. his beautiful fair hair fell

in golden curls over his neck and shoulders, and what with his blue limpid eyes, straight nose, small mouth, and dimpled chin, he was a perfect model of childish beauty. At eight years old this infant phenomenon danced exquisitely, rode to perfection, and acquitted himself honourably in all military exercises. He won all hearts by his sunny smiles, and by the princely courtesy with which, when he was in an amiable mood, he bowed to the admiring crowds as he passed by. By the voice of the people he was named Prince Charming, and the name stuck to him always.

Charming was as beautiful as the day; but the sun has spots, and so have princes. The child dazzled the court by his beauty, but there was a shady side to his character that did not escape the observant eyes of those who loved or envied him. Supple, agile, and quick at all bodily exercises, Charming was idle and indifferent about all intellectual pursuits. He had taken it into his head that he would know everything without the trouble of studying. It is true that all his governesses, courtiers, and servants were in the habit of saying to him, that work was never meant for kings, and that all that was required of a prince was to fling with a free hand, to the poets, and authors, and artists of his dominions, a little of the money that his people were only too happy to give him. These sayings tickled the vanity of Prince Charming, and at twelve years of age this amiable child still refused to look at an alphabet with a firmness quite precocious. Three tutors in turn, chosen from among the most patient and clever men of the realm—an ecclesiastic, a philosopher, and a colonel—had tried in vain to manage the youthful prince. The ecclesiastic forgot his tact, the philosopher lost his patience, and the colonel was at his wit's end, while Charming remained master of the field, and only followed his own caprices. He lived without restraint or discipline of any kind—obstinate as a mule, passionate as a turkey-cock, dainty as a cat, and lazy as a negro—he was, as far as other things went, an accomplished prince, the hope and idol of a people who only cared for grace and beauty in their kings.

CHAPTER II

PAZZA

ALTHOUGH King Oddo had been brought up at court, he was a most sensible man; the ignorance of Prince Charming grieved him, and he often wondered what would become of his kingdom in the hands of a prince whom the basest flatterer could rule with the greatest ease. What was to be done? What method was he to use with regard to a child whom an adored wife had left him as a dying legacy? Sooner than see his son cry, King Oddo would have given up his crown to him; his tender heart unmanned him. Love is not blind, whatever poets say. Alas! how happy should we be if it were so.

Every evening after the state council was over, King Oddo was wont to repair to his friend the Marchioness of Costoro. She was an ancient dame, who had dandled the king upon her knees in days gone by, and who alone was able to recall to him the sweet memories of his childhood and youth. Report said she was ugly and dabbled in magic; but the world is very uncharitable, and it is well not to believe half of what it says. The marchioness, who had handsome features and venerable white hair, still bore traces of having been beautiful in her youth.

One day, after Charming had been more unmanageable than usual, the king appeared before the marchioness with a careworn face. According to his wont, he seated himself at a card-table, and taking up a pack of cards, commenced a game of Patience; in this way he used to drown thought, and to forget for some hours the anxieties of business and the worries incidental to royalty. After placing sixteen cards in a perfect square, he drew a deep sigh.

"Marchioness!" cried he, "you see before you the most unhappy of fathers, and saddest of kings. Notwithstanding his natural sweetness of disposition, Charming is becoming every day more naughty and wilful. Must I leave behind me an heir like this, and confide the happiness of my people to a crowned fool!"

"Such is life," returned the marchioness. "You will always find idleness and beauty are inseparable; while wit

and ugliness go hand in hand. I have an example of this in my own home. A few days ago a great-great-niece was sent me, who has no relation in the world save myself; she is as brown as a toad, as thin as a spider, as mischievous as a monkey, and as clever as a book, and she is not yet ten years old. Judge for yourself, sire—here comes my little fright to greet you."

Oddo turned his head and perceived a child, whose appearance answered exactly the description given by the marchioness. A prominent forehead, great black eyes, frizzy hair drawn off her face *à la Chinoise*, a sallow skin, large white teeth, and red hands at the end of a pair of long arms, did not give her a very prepossessing appearance; but the butterfly emerges from a chrysalis, and how many lovely women have been ugly little maidens of ten? The little curiosity approached the king and dropped so grave a courtesy, that Oddo could not repress a laugh, though he had felt but little inclined for laughter a moment since.

"Who are you?" he asked, as he held the child by the chin.

"Sire," she gravely rejoined, "I am Donna Dolores-Rosario-Coral-Concha-Baltazara-Melchiora-Gaspara-and-All Saints, daughter of the noble knight, Don Pascual-Bartolomeo-Francesco de Asiz, and —"

"That will do," said the king. "I did not ask for your whole family history. We are not here to assist at your baptism, or your marriage. What is the name you are generally known by?"

"Sire," answered the child, "I am called 'Pazza.'"¹

"And why are you called 'Pazza'?" inquired the king.

"Because it is not my name, sire," she replied.

"Come, that's strange!" said the king.

"Nay, it is quite natural," returned the child. "My aunt says I am too foolish for any of the saints to own me for a namesake, and that is why she has given me a name that could not possibly offend any of them."

¹ "Pazza" is pronounced "patsa," and is the Italian for "foolish." It seems that in the kingdom of Thistledown they spoke a very mixed language.

"Well said, my child," returned King Oddo. "I see you are a very clever girl. It is not everyone who knows how to keep good friends with the saints. Perhaps, as you seem to know a good deal, you can tell me what a philosopher is?"

"A philosopher is a man who is thoroughly conversant with every subject on which he speaks, and knows exactly what he is about when he is carrying out any work."

"Ah!" said the king, "if philosophers were anything like what you imagine them to be, I would turn my Academy of Arts and Sciences into my Council of State, and I would hand over to it the entire government of my kingdom. What is an ignoramus?"

"Sire," returned Pazza, "there are three different kinds of ignoramus: there are those who do not know anything; those who speak of things of which they know nothing; and those who will not learn anything. All three are only fit for the stake or the scaffold."

"That is a proverb that you have just repeated," said the king. "Can you tell me what proverbs are called?"

"Yes, sire," answered the child, "the Wisdom of Nations."

"And why are they so called?"

"Because they are foolish," rejoined Pazza. "They contradict each other, and are made to suit all tastes. Proverbs are like bells that ring out assent or dissent according to the humour of the person who listens to them."

Thereupon, Pazza, jumping up, caught a fly that was buzzing near the king's nose. She then left the king, and fetching her doll, seated herself on the floor to play with it.

"Well, sire," said the marchioness, "what do you think of the child?"

"She is too clever by half," returned the king: "she won't live."

"Ah, sire," cried Pazza, "you are not polite to my aunt, who is no longer a child!"

"Silence, gipsy!" said the old lady, smiling, "we must never set our princes right."

"Marchioness!" exclaimed the king, "an idea has just

struck me; it is so strange a one that I hardly dare confide it to you, yet I have an immense desire to carry it into practice. I can do nothing with my son. Reason has no effect upon him; but perhaps folly may succeed better. If I were sure that it would be so, I would make Pazza Charming's teacher; though he rebels against his masters he might perhaps be led by a child. The only objection to this plan is, that no one will agree with me as to its advisability. I shall have all the world against me."

"Nonsense," said the marchioness, "the world is so stupid, that you only show your sense by disregarding its opinions."

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST LESSON

IT was thus that Pazza was entrusted with the tuition of the young prince. There was no official nomination to the post; there was no announcement in the *Gazette* that the king, with his usual wisdom, had found a wonderful genius to whom he had confided the training of his son; but the very next day Charming was sent to visit the marchioness and permitted to play with Pazza. Left together, the two children gazed at each other in silence. Pazza, the bolder of the two, spoke first.

"What is your name?" said she to her new companion.

"People who don't know me call me Your Royal Highness," answered Charming, in a tone of pique; "people who do, call me simply Sire. That's etiquette."

"What is etiquette?" asked Pazza.

"I don't know," replied Charming. "When I jump, or shout, and when I want to roll on the ground, they tell me that isn't etiquette; when I am quiet and feel bored—that is etiquette."

"As we are here to amuse ourselves," rejoined Pazza, "there is no etiquette at all in the case. Talk to me as if I were your sister, and I will talk to you as if you were my brother. I won't call you Sire."

"But you don't know me!" said Charming.

"What does that matter?" answered Pazza. "I will love you—that's better. They say you dance so beautifully. Do teach me!"

The ice was broken; Charming took the little girl by the waist, and ere half an hour was past he had taught her the polka danced in those days.

"How well you dance!" said he; "you have learned the step already."

"That is because you are so good a master," said she. "It is my turn now to teach you something."

She then took up a beautiful picture-book, and showed him pictures of great buildings, fishes, statesmen, parrots, learned men, curious animals and flowers, all of which amused Charming very much indeed.

"Look here," said Pazza, "here is the explanation about all these pictures. Let us read it."

"I don't know how to read," rejoined Charming.

"Then I will teach you. I will be your little mistress."

"No," replied the obstinate prince, "I won't read. My masters bore me dreadfully."

"Very well; but I am not a master," said Pazza. "See, here is an A—a beautiful A—say A."

"No," rejoined Charming, frowning as he spoke, "I will never say A."

"Not to please me?"

"No, never! We have had enough of this. I don't like people who contradict me," said the prince.

"A courteous man never refuses a lady anything," replied Pazza.

"Let me alone," returned Charming, choking with anger. "I don't like you any longer; and I desire that for the future you call me Sire!"

"My charming Sire," replied Pazza, red with anger, "you *shall* read, or you shall tell me why!"

"I will not read!"

"You will not?—once—twice—thrice!"

"No—no—no!" screamed the prince.

Pazza raised her hand, and piff-paff—lo! the king's son had received a stinging box on the ears. Pazza had once

been told that she was clever to the very tips of her fingers. She ought not to have taken this speech literally. It certainly never does to joke with children.

On receiving this first lesson in reading, Charming turned pale and shook with anger, then his face flushed scarlet, and

great tears filled his eyes; he looked at his young mistress with an expression that startled her. All at once, and with a great effort, he recovered his self-control, and said, in a voice that trembled slightly:

“Pazza, here is the letter A.”

The same day, and during the same lesson, he learned the whole twenty-six letters of the alphabet. At the end of the week he was able to spell correctly, and before a month elapsed he could read any book that was laid before him.



*Prince Charming taught her
the polka (P. 254)*

Imagine the king's joy! He kissed Pazza upon both cheeks; he wanted her always to be with his son and with himself; and he made the child his friend and counsellor, to the great disgust of all his courtiers. Charming, always sullen and silent, learned all that his young mentor could teach him, and soon went back to his old tutors, whom he astonished by his intelligence and docility. He repeated his grammar so well that his master found himself wondering one day whether the definitions which he had never understood had not a meaning after all. Charming no less surprised the philosopher, who taught him every evening the reverse

of what the ecclesiastic had taught him in the morning. But of all his masters the one to whom he listened with the least repugnance was the colonel. It is true that Bayonet—that was the name of the colonel—was a clever strategist, and could say, like the philosopher of old (with a trifling variation)—“I am a man, and nothing that concerns the art of despatching my fellow men is strange to me” (*Homo sum, et nihil humanum a me alienum puto*).

He it was who initiated Charming in the mysteries of buttons and facings; he it was who taught his pupil that the art of war was the noblest study for a prince, and that the groundwork of statesmanship was to review troops with the purpose of going to war, and to go to war for the purpose of exercising the troops. Perhaps it was not quite after this fashion that Oddo understood the art of government, but while he kept his son's future in his own hands he was so pleased with Charming's progress in the present, that he would not interfere in any way with the work of education which had been so long despaired of.

“My son,” he often said, “do not forget that you owe everything to Pazza.”

When the king spoke thus Pazza blushed with pleasure and used to look tenderly at the prince, for, notwithstanding all her cleverness, she was foolish enough to love him.

Charming contented himself with coldly replying that gratitude was the virtue peculiar to princes, and that Pazza would learn one day that her pupil forgot nothing.

CHAPTER IV

THE MARRIAGE OF PAZZA

WHEN Prince Charming had attained his seventeenth year he went one morning in search of King Oddo, whose health was declining, and whose great wish it was to see his son married before he died.

“My father,” said he, “I have long pondered on your wise words. I owe my existence to you, but Pazza has done yet more for me in awakening my mind and soul. The only way I see of paying the debt, is by marrying her to whom

I owe all that I am. So I have come to ask you for the hand of Pazza."

"My dear boy," replied Oddo, "your resolution does you honour. Pazza is not of royal birth, and under other circumstances I should not have chosen her as a wife for you; but when I think upon her virtues, her amiable qualities, and above all upon the service she has rendered us, I forget my foolish prejudices. Pazza has the soul of a queen, she shall ascend the throne with you. In the land of Thistledown people think enough of intellect and goodness to pardon what fools would call an unequal match, and what I call a most royal one. Happy is the man who makes choice of an intelligent woman for his wife, one capable of understanding and loving him! To-morrow your betrothal shall be publicly announced, and in two years' time you shall be married."

The marriage took place sooner than the king had anticipated. Fifteen months after he had spoken these memorable words, Oddo died of exhaustion. He had taken his profession in serious earnest, and royalty caused his death. The old marchioness and Pazza mourned their friend and benefactor, but they were alone in their grief. Without being a bad son, Charming was distracted from his sorrow by the cares of state; the court hoped everything from the new king, and thought no more of the old one, whose generous hand was closed by death.

After doing honour to the memory of his father by a magnificent funeral, the young prince gave himself up to love. His marriage was celebrated with a splendour that delighted the good folk of Thistledown. The taxes were doubled, but who could regret money spent for so noble a purpose? People came from hundreds of miles round to see the new king, and greatly admired Pazza, whose budding beauty and kindly air won all hearts. In due course came interminable dinners, speeches longer than the dinners, and poetical addresses more wearisome even than the speeches. In short, it was altogether a festivity unequalled in history, and six months after people were still talking of it rapturously.

When night came on, Charming took the hand of his amiable young bride, and with cold politeness led her through long corridors to the tower of the castle. On entering, Pazza was alarmed at finding herself in a dismal chamber with grated windows, huge locks, and iron bars.

"What is this place?" said she; "it looks like a prison."

"Yes," returned the prince, as he gazed with a terrible meaning in his eyes at the little queen, "it is the prison you will never quit till you leave it for your grave!"

"My darling, you frighten me," said Pazza, smiling: "am I a criminal without knowing it? Have I incurred your displeasure that you threaten me with this dungeon?"

"Your memory is but short," replied Charming. "He who inflicts an injury writes it upon the sand, he who receives one inscribes it upon marble."

"Charming," rejoined the poor child, over whom terror was now stealing, "you are now repeating one of those sentences in the speeches that have bored me so. Have you nothing better to say to me to-day?"

"Unhappy creature," cried the king, "you have forgotten the blow you once gave me, but I have forgotten nothing. I married you that I might take your life, and that you might slowly expiate your crime of high treason!"

"My dear," said the young girl, with a pretty graceful petulance, "you look just like Blue Beard; but you do not frighten me in the least, I assure you. I know you, Charming, and I warn you that unless you put an end to this unpleasant joke I shall not give you one, but three boxes on the ear. Make haste and take me away, or I vow I will keep my word."

"Vow what you like, madam," cried the king, furious at not intimidating his victim. "I accept your vow, and I vow on my side that you shall never enter the nuptial chamber unless I have been fool enough to receive an insult thrice, which can only be washed out in blood. Let him laugh who wins. Here, Rachimburg!"

In answer to this terrible name a bearded gaoler of threatening aspect entered the chamber. With a rough push he forced the queen down upon a miserable pallet and shut

to the door, with a rattle of keys and locks enough to frighten the most innocent heart. If Pazza wept it was so quietly that no one heard her. Tired of the silence,

Charming went away raging at heart, and determined that by force he would break the proud spirit that defied him. "Vengeance," it is said, "is the pleasure of kings."

Two hours later the marchioness received by a trusty hand a little note that told her of her niece's sad fate. How did it reach her? I shall not betray the secret, for if perchance a charitable gaoler be found, it is well to make much of him: the race is scarce, and daily becoming scarcer.



*Pazza was alarmed at finding herself
in a dismal chamber* (p. 258)

CHAPTER V

A TERRIBLE EVENT

THE next day the *Gazette* announced that the queen had been taken violently ill with brain fever the very night of her marriage, and there was little hope of her life. There was not a courtier that did not instantly remark that he had noticed how extremely agitated the princess had appeared the day before, and that no one could be surprised at her illness. Everyone pitied the king, who received with a gloomy awkward air the tokens of affection lavished upon him. No doubt his sorrow overwhelmed him, but this sorrow seemed much lightened after the visit of the Marchioness of Costoro

The good lady was very sad. She much wished to see her dear child; but she was so aged, and she felt so feeble and so sensitive, that she implored the king to spare her so heartrending a sight. She threw herself into Charming's arms, who on his side embraced her tenderly, and she withdrew saying that she put all her hopes and all her confidence in the love of the king and in the skill of the court physician.

She had but just left, when the physician, bending down to Charming's ear, whispered two words that caused a smile to irradiate the king's countenance, which, however, was quickly suppressed. Having got rid of the marchioness there was nothing now to be feared. Vengeance was assured to him. Baron Wieduwillst was a great physician. Born in the land of Dreams, he had early left his own country to seek his fortune in the kingdom of Thistledown. He was too clever a man not to make his fortune. In the five years that he spent at the celebrated University of Lugenmausberg, the medical theory had changed twenty-five times. Thanks to this solid education, the baron had a firmness of principle that nothing could shake. According to his own account he had the frankness and bluntness of a soldier; sometimes he even swore, especially before ladies. He was in the habit of receiving fees for having no opinion of his own. It was into his incorruptible hands that the poor queen had fallen. She had been in confinement three days, and people were already beginning to speak of other matters, when Rachimburg, one morning, all dishevelled, rushed into the chamber of the king, and threw himself trembling at his feet.

"Sire," said he, "I bring you my head. The queen has disappeared during the night."

"What is this you tell me?" cried the king, turning pale. "The thing is an impossibility. The dungeon is grated on all sides."

"Yes," returned the gaoler, "it seems impossible, but it is very certain. The gratings are all there, and the walls too, and the locks and keys have not been moved; but witches can pass through walls without disturbing a single stone, and who knows whether the prisoner was not one?"

The king sent for the baron—he was a strong-minded man, and did not believe in witchcraft. He tapped the walls, he shook the gratings, he cross-questioned the gaoler, but all to no purpose. Trustworthy people were sent to every part of the town, the marchioness was watched, as the baron suspected her; but after a week the search was

abandoned as useless. Rachimburg lost his post of gaoler; but as he knew the royal secret, and there was further use for him besides, and he was burning to be avenged, they made him doorkeeper of the palace. Furious on account of his late mishap, he exercised so strict a supervision, that in less than three days he six times arrested the great Wieduwillst himself, and thus disarmed suspicion.

At the end of a week some fishermen brought to the palace the gown and mantle belonging to the queen; the tide had cast these sad relics, all soiled with sand and spray, upon



*Rachimburg
arrested Wieduwillst* (P. 261)

the shore. The poor mad creature had probably drowned herself, and no one doubted this to have been the case when they saw the sorrow of the king and the tears of the marchioness. A Council of State was held, which decided that the queen was legally dead; and the king being legally a widower, his faithful counsellors implored his majesty in the interests of his kingdom to shorten the painful term of mourning, and to re-marry as soon as possible, and so consolidate the dynasty. This decision was carried to the king by Baron Wieduwillst, first physician to the court and president of the council. He made so touching a speech on

the occasion that the entire court was reduced to tears, and Charming was compelled to throw himself into the arms of the baron, apostrophizing him the while as his cruel friend.

There is no need to dilate upon the funeral of a queen so much regretted—in the kingdom of Thistledown everything is held a pretext for a ceremonial—it was arranged with great pomp; but the most perfect thing of the whole was the behaviour of the young ladies of the court. Each one gazed at Charming, whose mourning garments made him look handsomer than ever; each one cried with one eye to do honour to the queen, while they smiled with the other to fascinate the king. Oh! if only photography had been invented then, what portraits those ancient times might have transmitted to us! The good folk then had passions; love, hate, and anger animated their speaking countenances. Civilization may be the triumph of morality, but is certainly the destruction of art.

After the account of the funeral, which, according to etiquette, occupied six columns of the paper, the *Gazette* announced what mourning was to be worn. Blue and rose colour were the sad colours in the country of Thistledown. The court was to mourn profoundly during three weeks, and to console itself gradually in the course of the three following weeks; but as the period of slight mourning fell at the time of the carnival, and as trade was protected, it was decided that a masked ball should be given at the castle. Immediately the milliners and tailors set to work; great people and small asked for invitations, and began to plot and intrigue for them, as though the fate of the monarchy depended upon it.

It was after this solemn fashion poor Pazza was mourned.

CHAPTER VI THE MASKED BALL

AT last the great day so impatiently longed for arrived. For six weeks the good people of Thistledown had been in a fever of excitement. Ministers, senators, generals, magistrates, princesses, duchesses, and citizens' wives were

no longer the topics of conversation; for twenty leagues round nothing was talked of but clowns, harlequins, punchinello, zingaris, columbines, and follies. Politics were at a standstill, or, to speak more accurately, the nation was divided into two great parties—the conservatives who were going to the ball, and the opposition who were not.

If one may believe the official report, the *fête* in its magnificence surpassed all *fêtes* past and future. The ball took place in the pavilion most gorgeously decorated and situated in the midst of lovely gardens. After following a perfect labyrinth of avenues, softly lighted by lamps of alabaster, the guest suddenly came upon the ball-room resplendent with gold and flowers, verdure, and lights. The orchestra, half hidden in the foliage, played the most entrancing music, which by turns was now passionate and now gay. Added to this, the richness of the costumes, the brilliancy of the diamonds, and the amusement afforded by the masks, made a scene of enchantment which only the cold heart of an old stoic could possibly resist.

Yet notwithstanding all this, King Charming was bored! Concealed under a blue domino, and his face completely masked, he had paid his addresses to the most elegant and the gayest among the dancers; he had lavished on them all his wit and powers of fascination, and had only met with indifference and coldness. His partners scarcely listened to him, they yawned in answering, and were in haste to leave him. Every glance, every encouragement, was reserved for a black domino with knots of red ribbon, who walked nonchalantly about the ballroom, and sultan-like accepted all the compliments and smiles that greeted him. This domino was Baron Wieduwillst, a great friend of the king, but still a greater friend of himself. To amuse himself he had only that morning whispered to two ladies under the seal of the greatest secrecy that the prince would wear red ribbons on his black domino. Was it his fault that these ladies had not been able to keep the secret, or that the prince had changed his dress?

While the baron was thus enjoying his unexpected triumph, Charming went and seated himself in a corner of

the ball-room, and hid his face in his hands. Alone in the midst of the crowd and the noise he sank into a reverie, and the image of Pazza rose up before him. He did not reproach himself at all, his vengeance had been just, and yet he felt some remorse. Poor Pazza! No doubt she had been very much to blame, but at least she loved him, she understood him, she listened to him with eyes beaming with joy. What a difference to all these foolish women, who could not at once recognize a prince behind his mask! He rose hastily to leave the ball, when at a little distance he noticed a mask who, like himself, had withdrawn from the *fête*, and seemed to be lost in thought. The domino a little open revealed the dress of a Spanish gipsy, and shoes with buckles adorned feet smaller than Cinderella's.

The king approached nearer to the object of his curiosity, and saw behind the velvet mask two large black eyes, whose melancholy gaze surprised and charmed him.

"Beautiful mask," he said, "this is not your place; you ought to be in the midst of that excited crowd who are seeking the prince to dispute his smile and his heart—there a crown is to be gained, do you not know that?"

"I do not aspire to one," replied the domino, in a grave gentle voice. "To play at that game of chance is to risk mistaking the Knave for the King, and I am too proud for that."

"But if I pointed out to you the king?" inquired Charming.

"What should I say to him?" answered the unknown. "I should no longer have the right to blame him without offence, nor to praise him without flattery."

"Then you think very badly of him?" returned the king.

"No," rejoined the stranger, "only a *little* badly. There is a great deal of good in him; but what does it matter?"

After saying this, the domino opened her fan, and relapsed into a reverie.

This indifference astonished Charming; he spoke eagerly, but she answered coldly. He begged, he implored, he got

so excited that at last the lady consented to listen to him, not any longer in the ballroom, where the heat was overpowering, and curiosity apt to be indiscreet, but under the long avenues where a few scattered couples sought a little silence and fresh air.

Night was advancing; already the gipsy had spoken several times of going home, to the extreme regret of the prince, who in vain begged her to unmask. The lady did not answer.

"You drive me to despair, madam!" cried the king, who felt strangely drawn toward this mysterious guest. "Why this cruel silence?"

"It is because I have recognized you, sire," replied the stranger, with emotion. "Your voice—which speaks straight to the heart—your language, your grace, tell too clearly who you are. Let me go, Prince Charming."

"No, madam," cried the king, fascinated by so much intelligence; "you alone have recognized me; you alone have understood; to you belong my heart and my crown. Take off that hateful mask, and let us return at once to the ballroom, and I will present to the stupid crowd the woman that I have the happiness not to displease. Say but the word, and all my people will be at your feet."

"Sire," replied the unknown, sadly, "allow me to refuse an offer which does me so much honour, and of which I shall ever keep the memory. I confess I am ambitious; there was a time when I should have been proud to share your name and your throne; but, above all, I am a woman, and all my happiness is in being loved. I do not wish to share a divided heart, if it were but with a memory; I am jealous, even of the past."

"I have never loved anyone," cried the prince, with an energy that made the stranger start. "There was a mystery in my marriage that I can only reveal to my wife; but I swear to you that I never loved before, and that I do so now for the first time."

"Show me your hand," said the gipsy. "Come near this lamp, and I will see if you are telling me the truth."

Charming held out his hand confidently. The gipsy traced the lines and sighed.

"You are right, sire," said she; "you have never loved; but even that does not satisfy my jealousy; before me another woman has loved you. Death does not break these sacred ties; the queen still loves you, and you belong to her. To accept the heart which you can no longer dispose of would be on my part a profanation and a crime. Farewell."

"Madam!" rejoined the king, in a confident tone, "you do not know what you are making me suffer. There are things I would wish to bury in an eternal silence, and which you force me to reveal. The queen never loved me; ambition alone dictated her conduct."

"That is not true," said the unknown, letting go the arm of the prince. "The queen loved you."

"No, madam," answered Charming. "In the past there was an abominable intrigue, of which I and my father were the victims."

"Enough," said the stranger, whose hands were trembling and whose fingers twitched in a curious way. "At least respect the dead, and do not calumniate them."

"Madam," cried the prince, "I assure you what I say is true, and nobody has ever doubted my word; the queen never loved me; she was a wicked woman."

"Ah!" said the domino.

"Self-willed, violent, jealous!"

"If she was jealous, that showed she loved you," interrupted the mask. "Seek for a proof which has at least an appearance of probability. Do not slander a heart which was wholly yours."

"She loved me so little," said the king, much moved, "that the very evening of our marriage she dared to tell me to my face that she had only married me for my crown."

"That is not true," said the gipsy, raising her hands. "That is not true."

"Madam, I swear it!"

"You lie!" cried the stranger.



Two boxes on the ear blinded the eyes of the prince
(P. 269)

And piff-paff! lo, two boxes on the ear blinded the eyes of the prince, and the unknown had flown.

Furious, the king drew back two steps, and felt for his sword, but a man does not go to a ball dressed as if for battle, and instead of a weapon he only found a bow of ribbon. He ran after his enemy, but where had she gone? In the labyrinth of avenues Charming lost himself twenty times, and he only met some harmless dominoes who were walking about in couples, and did not trouble themselves about his coming or going. Out of breath and in despair he re-entered the ball-room, where he felt sure the stranger had taken refuge; but how was he to discover her?

A brilliant idea occurred to the prince. If he made people drop their masks, he would be sure to find the gipsy, betrayed by her own agitation and confused by the presence of the king.

Immediately Charming jumped upon a chair, and in a voice which startled the whole room—

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he cried, “day is dawning, and the fun is languishing! let us infuse new life into our ball by a fresh caprice. Let us put off our masks. Whoever loves me will follow my example.”

He put off his domino, threw his mask away, and appeared in the most magnificent and picturesque Spanish dress ever seen. There was a general cry; every eye was turned on the king, and then on the domino with red ribbons, who quickly disappeared, with a modesty that was far from assumed. Each one unmasked, and all the ladies approached the prince. It was remarked that he had a very strong preference for the gipsies. Every zingari, young or old received his homage; he took their hand and gazed at them with an expression which made all the other masks frightfully jealous. Then, suddenly he made a sign to the orchestra; the dancing recommenced, and the prince disappeared.

He ran out again into the gardens, hoping to find the traitress who had insulted him. What was leading him on? Vengeance, doubtless. His blood boiled in his veins, he walked he knew not whither; he would stop suddenly, look round and listen. At the least ray of light which penetrated

the foliage he darted forward like a madman. In the windings of one alley he met Rachimburg, who advanced toward him with scared look and shaking hands.

"Sire," whispered he in a mysterious voice, "your majesty has seen it?"

"What?" asked the king.

"The phantom, sire. It passed close to me. I am a lost man; to-morrow I shall be dead."

"What phantom?" inquired Charming. "What is the idiot talking about?"

"A spectre—a domino with flaming eyes," replied Rachimburg, "which made me kneel down, and gave me two boxes on the ear."

"It is she," cried the king, "it is she! Why did you let her escape?"

"Please your majesty, I had not my halberd with me, but if ever I see her again, living or dead, I will strike her."



The domino quickly disappeared
(P. 269)

"You had better not," said the king. "If ever she returns, be careful not to frighten her, but follow her and discover her retreat. But where is she! Where can she have passed? Lead me; if I find her your fortune is made."

"Sire," replied the honest porter, looking at the moon, "if the phantom is anywhere at all, it is up there. I saw it as clearly as I see you vanish away in mist. But before disappearing, it told me to say two words to your majesty."

"Speak quickly," exclaimed Charming.

"Sire," he answered, "these words are terrible; I shall never dare repeat them to your majesty."

"Speak, I insist upon it."

"Sire, the phantom said in a sepulchral tone, 'Go tell the king, that if he weds another he is a dead man. The beloved one will return.'"

"Enough," said the prince, whose eyes now shone with a strange brilliancy: "take my purse; henceforth you are attached to my person. I appoint you first valet of the bedchamber. I count upon your devotion and your discretion. Let this ever remain a secret between us."

"It is the second," murmured Rachimbürg; and he went away with a firm tread, like a man who neither allows himself to be cast down by evil fortune, nor dazzled by good.

In the *Gazette* the next day the following lines were to be seen:—"It is reported that the king thinks of marrying again shortly. The king knows what he owes to his subjects, and is ready to sacrifice himself for their good, but the people of Thistledown have too much delicacy of feeling not to respect his recent sorrow; the king can only think of his beloved wife. He hopes for consolation in time, which as yet he has not found."

This paragraph threw the court and the whole town into a state of excitement; the young girls considered that the king was overscrupulous, and more than one mother shrugged her shoulders and said the king had the prejudices of a *bourgeois*. But by evening every household was set by the ears. There was not a woman who did not seek a quarrel with her husband, and force him to confess that there was only one heart in all the kingdom capable of loving, and only one faithful husband, and that was King Charming.

CHAPTER VII

TWO CONSULTATIONS

AFTER so many agitating events, the King was seized with an extreme *ennui*. To divert his mind, he tried all sorts of amusements; he went out hunting, he presided at his council of state, he went to the play and to the opera,

he gave grand receptions, he read a Carthaginian novel, and held a dozen reviews—but all in vain. An ever-present memory allowed him neither peace nor repose. The gipsy haunted him even in his dreams, he saw her, spoke to her, and she listened; but somehow, whenever the mask fell, it was the pale, sad face of Pazza that appeared to him.



The King

The baron was the sole confidant to whom Charming could confess his remorse, but at the word remorse Wieduwillst would burst out laughing.

“Effect of habit, sire,” he would say. “Multiply impressions, and the feeling will wear off.”

To distract the prince and help him to get rid of his sorrow by strong measures, the baron used to sup every evening *tête-à-tête* with his majesty, and in the

wine-cup the king found oblivion. Wieduwillst drank as much as the king, but the wine did not get into his strong head. The baron might have challenged both Bacchus and Silenus. While Charming, by turns noisy or silent, was at one of the two extremes—either hilarious or much depressed, always excited and never happy—Wieduwillst, calm and smiling, influenced the mind of the prince, and out of sheer goodness of heart took the burden of government on his own shoulders. Already three decrees had placed in his hand the Ministries of Justice, Finance, and Police. The baron well understood the advantages of centralization. He administered the taxes in such a way as to remove from himself all anxiety about the future. Justice in his hands struck at those rash people who complained too loudly, while the police knew how to silence those who spoke under their breath. Yet notwithstanding the ingenuity of these political combinations, the people, ever ungrateful, did not appreciate their happiness.

The worthy inhabitants of Thistledown loved to grumble, and now their pleasure was spoiled. The name of King Oddo was ever in their thoughts, and everyone regretted the good old times when they used to cry aloud on the housetop that they were gagged.

The baron was ambitious; he felt he was born to be a vizier. Each morning some new ordinance made the people feel that the king was nothing, the minister everything. Charming was the only person who was not aware of his own insignificance. Shut up in his palace and devoured by *cunni*, his only companion was a page whom the prime minister had attached to the king's person on the recommendation of Rachimburg. Wieduwillst was too much a man of the world to refuse anything to a first valet of the bed-chamber. Frolicsome, an indiscreet chatterbox, and over and above these things a good musician and a first-rate hand at cards, Tonto (which was the boy's name) amused the king by his merry ways, and pleased the minister no less by his other virtues. Devoted to his patron, the amiable page innocently repeated to him everything the prince said. This was not a difficult matter, for the king was always in a brown study and never said anything.

It is a fine thing to have all the solid benefits of power, but even with ministers *l'appétit vient en mangeant*. The ambitious Wieduwillst now wanted the honours and pomp of royalty. To dethrone Charming never entered into the head of his best friend: people have sometimes stupid prejudices and cling to old habits; but nothing could be easier than to frighten the prince into believing himself ill, and to send him some way off to seek a cure which would take a long time. In his absence Charming would appoint him his regent.

Charming was young, he still clung to life, and besides, how could he resist the affectionate solicitude of the good baron? One evening a consultation took place at the palace between the three most learned members of the faculty, the tall Tristan, stout Jocundus, and little Guilleret—three very celebrated men, who had made their fortunes—each had one idea, which means they never had possessed more.

After the king had been examined, his breathing listened to, his pulse felt, and himself turned round and round, Tristan took up his parable and in a rough voice said:

"Sire, you must take care of yourself like a peasant and live without exerting yourself in the least. Your disease is want of power, a constitutional atony; there is nothing but a journey to Clearwells which can cure you. Go at once, or you are a dead man. That is my advice."

"Sire," went on the portly Jocundus, "I entirely agree with the admirable opinion of my learned colleague. You are ill from being in fact too well. Your illness proceeds from constitutional plethora. Go and drink the waters of Clearwells and you will find yourself completely cured. Go at once, or you are a dead man. That is *my* advice."

"Sire," said little Guilleret, "I can only admire the wonderful acumen of my seniors. I bow before their greater knowledge. Like them, I believe you to be suffering from derangement of the nervous system. Go and drink the waters at Clearwells and you will be cured. Go at once, or you are a dead man. That is *my* advice."

Hereupon they committed to writing their unanimous opinions, which Tonto carried at once to the office of the *Court Gazette*. Then the three doctors rose, took leave of the king and the minister, pocketed their fees, and descended the staircase of the palace, quarrelling among themselves, or laughing, I do not know which.

After the departure of the three physicians, Wieduwillst read the result of the consultation, considered awhile, and looked at the king. Charming, who that evening had supped a little better than usual, was distraught and had not even listened to the doctors.

"Sire," said he, "the unanimous advice of these gentlemen is that if you wish to be cured, you must go off at once to Clearwells and abandon for a time all state affairs. Now this seems to me unworthy of your majesty; a great prince ought to sacrifice himself for his people, and——"

"Enough, enough," interrupted the king, "spare me that old saw. Let us come to the point. You want me to go, my good friend; you are dying to get rid of me—for my

own good—I know. Make out a decree that I entrust to you the regency and I will sign it.”

“Sire,” returned Wieduwillst, “the decree is there in the portfolio; a wise minister has always rough draughts of such things to suit any circumstance that may arise. We never know what may happen.”



*The queerest physician entered
the king's apartment (P. 275)*

Charming took the pen, and carelessly signed the decree without reading it. He handed it to the minister, who came forward smiling; suddenly the king withdrew the paper, and for a whim read it.

“What,” said he, “no setting forth of reasons? no assurance to my people of the good-will I bear you? Baron, you are too modest! To-morrow this decree shall be in the *Gazette* with a preamble written by your master and your friend. Good-night; those gentlemen have tired me.”

The prime minister went out with a light step and sparkling eyes, carrying his head high, and even prouder and more insolent than usual. Left alone, Charming relapsed into a reverie, and thought that after all he was not the most unhappy of princes, since heaven had given him a friend.

Suddenly, without being announced, the queerest little physician that was ever seen in a palace entered the king's apartment. His wig was perfectly white and curled down to the middle of his back, a beard like snow hung down to the bottom of his waistcoat, and he had besides wonderfully bright youthful eyes which made one think

they had come into the world sixty years after the rest of his body.

"Where are those idiots?" he cried in a shrill voice, striking the ground with his cane. "Where are those ignorant stupid pedants, who never waited for me? Ah!" he added, turning to the stupefied king, "you are the patient. That's all right. Show me your tongue. Quick, I am in a hurry."

"Who are you?" inquired the king.

"Dr. Truth, the greatest physician in the world," replied the newcomer. "You will soon see that, in spite of my modesty. Ask my pupil, Wieduwilst, who made me come from Dreamland. I can cure everything, even diseases which do not exist. Show me your tongue. Good. Where is the report of the consultation? Very good. 'Atony'—he's an ass! 'Plethora'—he's a greater ass!! 'Nerves'—he's the greatest ass!!! 'Drink the waters'—they are all asses!!!! Do you know what is the matter with you? It is sorrow, and worse than that."

"Do you see that?" asked Charming, quite startled.

"Yes, my son, it is written on your tongue. But I will soon cure you. To-morrow by mid-day you will be all right."

"To-morrow!" said the king. "But all my treasures——"

"Silence, my son," replied the doctor. "Whose is this portfolio?"

"The minister's," answered the king.

"Good. Sign these three papers for me."

"They are blank decrees," said the king. "What do you want to do with them?"

"They are my orders," returned the stranger. "*Contraria contrariis curantur*. Sign. Good! Be obedient, my son. To-morrow at noon you will be as gay as a lark. First decree: '*Si vis pacem, para pacem*'—I suppress six regiments. Second decree: 'A penny in the pocket of the peasant is worth twenty in the king's treasury'—I suppress the fourth part of the taxes. Third decree: 'Liberty is like the sun, it is the happiness and fortune of the poor; leave him his right to the sunshine'—I open all the political prisons, and

I abolish prisons for debt. You laugh, my son. It is a good sign when a sick man laughs at his doctor."

"Yes," said Charming; "I laugh as I think of the expression of Wieduwillst's face when he reads these orders in the *Gazette*. Enough of this folly, Dr. Buffoon. Give me back those papers. Let us have no more of this farce."

"What is that?" asked the little man, taking up the decree of regency. "Heaven forgive me, it is an abdication! Is that what you are thinking of, King Charming? What! The heritage of your fathers, the people entrusted to you, your honour, your good name—you cast everything at the feet of an adventurer? You allow yourself to be dethroned and duped by a traitor? Impossible! I will not allow it; I object. Do you hear?"

"Who are you, insolent man," exclaimed Charming, "who dares so to address your king?"

"Never mind," replied the doctor; "politeness does not consist in words. Have you nothing else on your mind?"

"This is too much," cried the king. "Leave my presence instantly, or I will throw you out of the window."

"Leave the room!" cried the little doctor, in his shrillest voice. "No! not before I have annulled this act of folly and stupidity."

Charming seized the madman, and called his guards. No one answered. Now threatening, now beseeching, the little old man struggled with astonishing vivacity. With a kick he managed to throw the lamp down; but the king, not fearing the darkness, held on tight to the wizard, whose strength grew less and less.

"Let me go," murmured the unknown; "for Heaven's sake, let me go! You don't know what you are doing. You are breaking my arm."

Words and prayers were all in vain. Suddenly, Piff-paff! piff-paff! a shower of boxes on the ear from a bold hand descended on the king. Taken aback, Charming strove to catch his invisible enemy, but he only clutched the empty air, and stumbling, called loudly for help, which did not come. A similar thing would never have happened to a minister. Kings are always the worst guarded.

CHAPTER VIII

THE END OF A DREAM

AT last the door opened, and Rachimburg entered according to custom, to help his majesty to undress. The faithful servant was exceedingly puzzled to find the king in the dark, groping along the wall.

"Where is that fiend of a doctor?" inquired Charming, who was foaming with rage.

"His excellency quitted the palace more than an hour ago."

"I am not speaking of Wieduwillst," exclaimed the king. "Where is that scoundrel who has just insulted me?"

Rachimburg looked at the king with a contrite air, and raised his eyes to heaven and sighed.

"A man has gone out by the door that leads to your room," said Charming. "How did he come in? How can he have made his escape?"

"Sire," replied Rachimburg, "I have never left my post, and I have seen no one."

"I tell you that a man was in this room a moment ago."

"Sire, your majesty can never be wrong," returned the servant. "If a man was in this room, he is in it still; that is to say, if he has not flown away, or if your majesty was not dreaming."

"Thrice doited idiot!" cried the king. "Do I look like a man who was dreaming? Did I upset the lamp? Did I tear up these papers?"

"Sire," said Rachimburg, "I am only a worm. Heaven forbid that I should give the lie to my sovereign! Your majesty does not pay me for contradicting you. But this year there has been an epidemic of singular dreams. It is impossible to say what one may do or suffer in one's sleep. Only just now sleep overtook me, and if I was not sure I had been dreaming, I would say that an invisible hand had given me two boxes on the ear, which woke me with a start."

"Two boxes on the ear!" said the king. "It must have been the phantom!"

"Your majesty is certainly right. I am only an idiot!" exclaimed Rachimburg. "It must have been the phantom."

"And I never recognized it!" said Charming. "Of course it was its voice and action all the time. What does it mean? Is it a new insult? Is it a warning from Heaven? Does some danger threaten me? It matters not; I will remain in my kingdom. My friend, not a word of all this. Take this purse, and keep my secret."

"It is the third," muttered the faithful Rachimburg; whereupon he undressed the king with a zeal and adroitness which made his majesty smile more than once.

So many emotions one after the other kept sleep from the prince's pillow, and it was already dawn before he sank into a deep slumber, and nearly midday when he awoke. At that first moment of waking, when one is neither asleep nor fully awake, Charming thought he heard curious noises; the bells were ringing, cannons roared, and three or four military bands were each playing a different air. The king rang his bell, and Rachimburg entered, holding in his hand a bouquet of flowers.

"Sire," said he, "let your majesty permit the humblest of his servants to be the first to express the universal joy. Your people are intoxicated with gratitude and love. The taxes diminished! The prisons opened!! The army reduced!!! Sire, you are the greatest king in the world. Never has the earth seen your equal. Show yourself on the balcony, respond to those cries of 'Long live the king!' Smile upon your subjects who are calling down blessings upon your head."

Rachimburg could not finish for his tears prevented him. He tried to dry his eyes, but he was so excited that instead of his pocket-handkerchief he drew the *Court Gazette* from his pocket and set to kissing it like a maniac.

Charming took the paper, and while he was being dressed, tried in vain to collect his scattered ideas. By what possible chance could these mad decrees have found their way into the official journal? Who could have put them in? Why did not Wieduwilist make his appearance? The prince wanted to consider the matter, to ask questions, and

to take counsel; but the people were already under his windows, and his majesty King Mob must not be kept waiting.

As soon as the king appeared on the balcony he was greeted by enthusiastic cheers, which touched him in spite of himself. Men threw their hats into the air, women waved their handkerchiefs, mothers held up their children and made them cry "Long live the king!" The guards of the palace had flowers in the muzzles of their muskets, the drums were beating, the officers waved their swords, which flashed in the sun, and there was universal joy. The general emotion touched Charming; he shed tears without knowing why. At that moment twelve o'clock struck. The phantom was right, the prince was cured. After the crowd, it was the turn of the officers of state, who came with the ministers at their head, to congratulate and thank the king for having so well understood the wishes of his faithful counsellors.

Only one person was absent from the *fête*, and that was Wieduwillst. Where had he hidden his rage and disgust? No one knew. A mysterious note received that morning had decided him to make his escape at once, and yet in this note were only these simple words, "The king knows all!" Who had written this fatal missive? It was not the prince; he alone perhaps in the palace thought of his minister, and was surprised not to see him near him.

Suddenly Tonto entered, pale and discomfited; he ran to the king and handed him a sealed letter, which an officer had brought at full gallop. The governor of the province, General Bayonet, announced terrible news. The six regiments which had been disbanded had revolted, with Wieduwillst at their head. The mutineers had proclaimed the dethronement of the king, whom they accused of horrible crimes, and especially of the murder of the queen. They were numerous and ably generaleed, and were approaching the capital, which was badly defended by a few discontented doubtful regiments. Bayonet implored the king to come without a moment's loss of time and take the command of the army; an hour late and everything would be lost.

Led away by Tonto and Rachimburg, the king, followed by some of his officers, left the palace secretly. A proclamation, placarded on the walls of the city and at the corners of the streets, affirmed that there was not a word of truth in the rumours that had been circulated by some malicious persons, and that the army had never been more loyal or more devoted. Thereupon there was a universal panic, consols fell five per cent. in half an hour, and only went up on the receipt of non-official intelligence that the king had been well received at the general's head-quarters.

CHAPTER IX

“WHEN BALE IS AT HIGHEST, BOTE IS AT NIGHTEST”

THE news was false; the king had been very coldly received. It was his own fault; melancholy, dispirited, and dreamy, Charming could not find one cheerful remark to make to the soldiers, nor one word of encouragement and confidence for the officers. He entered the general's tent and sank with a sigh into a chair. Tonto was scarcely less overcome.

“Sire,” said Bayonet, “allow me to speak to you with the frankness and the freedom of an old friend. The army is ripe for mutiny, but it still hesitates; we must infuse a new spirit into it. The enemy is in sight, let us attack; five minutes can sometimes decide the fate of empires, and such is the case at present. Do not wait until it is too late.”

“Very well,” said the king, “give the word to mount. In an instant I shall be with you.”

Left alone with Rachimburg and Tonto, the king resumed, in a despairing tone.

“My good friends,” said he, “leave a master who can no longer do anything for you. My miserable life is not worth a struggle. Betrayed by my friend, assassinated by a traitor, I can recognize in my affliction the finger of Providence. It is the just chastisement for my crime. I killed the queen by my stupid vengeance; the hour is come for me to expiate my fault. I am ready.”

"Sire," said Tonto, trying to smile, "shake off these melancholy thoughts. If the queen were here she would wish you to defend yourself. Take my word for it," he added, twisting his incipient moustache; "I know women; were they dead, they would still like to be avenged. Besides, you have not killed the queen; perhaps she is not so dead as you think."

"Child, what is that you say?" cried the king. "You are losing your head."

"I say," replied the page, "that there are women who make a point of dying just to aggravate their husbands, and why should there not be others who come to life again to aggravate them still more? Do not think of the dead, think of the living who love you. You are a king, fight like a king; and if you must die, die like a king."

"Sire," cried Bayonet, as he entered, sword in hand, "time presses."

"General, let them sound to horse," exclaimed Tonto. "We are off."

Charming let the general go, and, looking at Tonto, said;

"No, I shall not go. I don't know what I feel. I hate myself. I don't fear death. I am going to kill myself, and yet I am frightened. I cannot fight."

"Sire," said Tonto, "for Heaven's sake, recover your courage. To horse!—you must. Good heavens!" cried he, wringing his hands, "the king will not listen to me, and we are lost! Come," said he, taking hold of the prince by his cloak. "Get up, sire. To horse, unhappy man! Charming, save your kingdom, save your people, save all you love. Coward! look at me. I am only a boy, and I am about to die for you, You disgrace yourself. I, your servant, shall insult you. You are a coward! Do you hear?—a coward!" and piff-paff! behold the king boxed on the ears by an insolent page.

"Thunder and lightning!" cried the king, drawing his sword. "Before I die, I will at least have the satisfaction of killing that wretched boy."

But the wretched boy had run out of the tent. At one bound he jumped on his horse, and sword in hand had

dashed straight towards the enemy. "The king, my friends!" he shouted. "The king! Sound the trumpets! Forwards, forwards!"

Charming, mad with rage, had vaulted into the saddle in pursuit of the boy. Like a bull enraged by a red rag, he galloped with lowered head, never thinking about danger or death. Bayonet rode after the king, and the army followed their general. It was the finest cavalry charge on



The boy at one bound jumped on his horse (P. 282)

record. At the sound of the advancing squadrons, which made the earth tremble, the enemy, taken by surprise, had scarcely time to form in line of battle. But one man had recognized the king, and this was the wicked Wieduwillst. Charming, wholly occupied with his vengeance, saw nothing but the page whom he was pursuing, and the traitor, grasping his sabre, threw himself on the prince. All would have been over with the king had not Tonto, by an heroic act of devotion, dug his spurs into his horse's flanks, and

thus made the animal rear and throw him against Wiedu-willst. The page received the blow destined for his master. He gave one great cry, threw out his arms and fell; but instantly his death was avenged, for the king buried his sword up to the hilt in the body of the perfidious minister.

The death of the traitor decided the day; the royal army, electrified by the heroism of its leader, soon routed a few battalions that made no resistance. The rebels, who had nothing to hope for, asked for pardon, which was at once accorded them by the happy and merciful king. One hour after leaving the camp, where he had wanted to die, Charming re-entered it as a conqueror, leading victors and vanquished in the same ranks. The first shouted very loud, and the second louder still. Nothing gives such fervour to loyalty as a little treason.

CHAPTER X

WHERE IT IS SEEN THAT PEOPLE MUST NOT BE JUDGED BY APPEARANCES AND THAT TONTO WAS NOT TONTO

THE king entered the tent to take a little rest, when the sight of Rachimburg reminded him of Tonto.

"Is the page dead?" he inquired.

"No, sire," answered Rachimburg, "unfortunately for himself he still lives. There is no hope. I had him carried two steps from here to his aunt's, the Marchioness of Costoro."

"Is he the nephew of the marchioness?" exclaimed the king. "I was never told that before."

"Your majesty has forgotten," calmly answered the first valet of the chamber. "The poor boy has a dangerous wound in the shoulder; he can never recover. It would be a great satisfaction to him to see your majesty before he dies."

"Very well," said the king, "lead me to the poor dying fellow."

When he arrived at the castle, the king was received by the marchioness, who conducted him to a darkened room, where the thick curtains scarce allowed daylight to

penetrate. The page, pale and wounded, lay stretched on the bed. Nevertheless, he had sufficient strength to lift his head from the pillow to greet the king.

"How is this?" cried Charming; "it is the queerest wound I have ever seen in my life—the page has only a moustache on one side of his face."

"Sire," remarked the marchioness, "it is probably caused by the sword having cut off the other half of the moustache."

"Why, what miracle is this?" exclaimed the prince. "On one side it is my page, the rascal Tonto: on the other—no, I am not deceiving myself—it is you, my good angel and deliverer—it is you, my poor Pazza."

And the king fell on his knees and seized the hand which she held out to him.

"Sire," said Pazza, "my days are numbered; but, before I die—"

"No, no, Pazza, you must not die!" cried the prince in tears.

"Before I die," she added, lowering her eyes, "I want your majesty to pardon those two boxes on the ear that this morning with an over-anxious zeal——"

"Enough," said the king. "I forgive you. After all, my throne and honour are worth more than I received."

"Alas!" said Pazza, "that is not all."

"How?" said the king, "is there something else?"

"Sire!" said the marchioness, "what have you done? Look, my child is dying."

"Rouse yourself, Pazza!" cried the king. "Speak, and be sure beforehand of my forgiveness for anything you may have done. Alas! it is not you who ought to sue for pardon."

"Sire," murmured Pazza, "the doctor, the little doctor, who dared to give your majesty——"

"Did you send him?" asked the king, frowning.

"No, sire," she replied, "it was I myself, who, to rescue your majesty from the snares of a traitor, dared to apply——"

"Enough! enough!" said Charming. "I forgive you, although the lesson was rather severe."

"Alas! that is not all," said Pazza.

"What, something else?" cried the king, rising from his seat.

"Oh, aunt! I feel so ill!" said poor Pazza.

By dint of the tenderest care she recovered consciousness, and turning her languid eyes to the king, who was very much affected—

"Sire," she said, "the gipsy at the masked ball, who dared——"

"Was that you, Pazza?" returned Charming. "Oh, I forgive you those boxes on the ear; I thoroughly deserved them. To have doubted you, who are sincerity itself! But now I think of it," cried the king, "do you remember that rash vow you made the evening of our marriage? Naughty girl—you have kept your promise, it is for me to keep mine. Pazza, make haste and get well, and return with me to that palace from whence happiness departed with you."

"I may have a last favour to ask your majesty," said Pazza. "Rachimburg has been witness this morning of a scene I blush to remember, and of which nobody ought to know anything. I recommend to your favour this faithful servant."

"Rachimburg," said the king, "take this purse and keep this secret, if thou wishest to keep thy head."

Rachimburg kneeled on the ground beside the queen's bed, and kissed the hand of his liege lady.

"Your majesty," he muttered, "it is the fourth secret, and the fourth——"

Then rising from his knees, he said aloud, "God bless the hand of my benefactor!"

Some moments after this touching scene, Pazza was asleep. The king, still anxious, spoke to the marchioness.

"My aunt!" said he, "do you think she will recover?"

"Bah!" returned the old lady. "Joy can bring back a woman from the door of the tomb, however ill she

may be. What is happiness? Kiss the queen, my nephew, that will do her more good than all the doctors."

The king bent over the sleeping queen, and kissed her forehead. An angelic smile, perhaps caused by a happy dream, lighted up her pale face, and the king wept like a child.

CHAPTER XI

WHERE IT IS SHOWN THAT A WOMAN OWES OBEDIENCE TO HER HUSBAND

THE marchioness was right (ladies are always right when they are over sixty). Fifteen days of happiness put Pazza on her feet again, and allowed of her making a triumphal entry with the king her husband. Her paleness, and the fact of her arm being in a sling, added still further to her grace and beauty. Charming had no eyes for anything but the queen, and the people followed suit.

It took them more than an hour to reach the palace. The municipality of the capital of Thistledown had erected no less than three triumphal arches—threatening fortresses, each one defended by thirty-six deputations, and thirty-six speeches. The first arch, made of trellis-work, and ornamented with flowers and foliage, bore this inscription:

TO THE MOST TENDER AND FAITHFUL OF HUSBANDS.

Round this were grouped five or six thousand young girls, in white gowns and pink ribbons. They represented, so cooed these innocent doves, the springtime of the year, the promise of the future, which came to greet Glory and Beauty.

The second erection, more solidly built and covered with tapestry, bore on its summit a figure of Justice peeping from under her bandage, and holding her scales unevenly balanced, beneath which was written:

TO THE FATHER OF HIS PEOPLE.

TO THE BEST AND WISEST OF PRINCES.

Here priests, statesmen, and magistrates, in robes of every colour, represented Religion, Wisdom, and Virtue; at least

that is what these venerable gentlemen told the king, and they surely ought to have known.

The last, an immense arch made of cannons, was a regular military trophy, and bore for motto the following:

TO THE BRAVEST AND MOST VALIANT OF KINGS.

Here it was that the army awaited their general, and here the queen was greeted by the majestic voice of a hundred cannons and two hundred drums.

I will spare you an account of the banquet, which was interminable, and the sixty other speeches, that were reported in the *Court Gazette*, where they had already appeared two or three times before, and in which they were stored for the use of posterity. Nothing is more monotonous than happiness, and we must be indulgent to those whose duty it is to laud it officially.

The interminable evening was over at last. The king had lavished his sweetest smiles upon people whom in his heart he wished at Jericho. At midnight, Charming conducted the queen, not this time to the tower, but to her own beautifully furnished apartments. There a surprise awaited Pazza. At the end of the room was an illuminated transparency, on which the following verses were to be seen—so feeble that only a king could have written them. They were not published in the official gazette, but have been preserved to us by one of those silly gossiping people who will not allow past follies to be forgotten:

“Of a box on the ear, O ye idlers beware!
 Who revel in indolent ease;
 Ye fawners and flatterers servile, take care!
 Grave doctors assuming a wiseacre air
 With blatant, grandiloquent words and to spare,
 Your ears shall be boxed if we please.

“Ye husbands ungrateful, who think it is grand
 At love and at goodness to jeer,
 Take heed lest your wives should take it in hand
 Themselves to avenge, with true pride at command—
 Beware of a box on the ear!”

“Sire,” said Pazza, “what does this mean?”

“It means that I know myself,” replied the king. “I am nothing without you, dear Pazza. All I know, and every thought I have, I owe to you. When you are not here, I am only a body without a soul, and I commit all sorts of follies.”

“Sire,” rejoined Pazza, “your majesty must permit me to contradict you.”

“Good gracious!” answered the king, “I am not affecting a mock modesty. I am well aware that I have the strongest head among my counsellors, and my ministers themselves are forced to acknowledge this. They are always of my opinion; but, for all that, there is more wisdom in your little finger than in all my royal brain. My course is decided. Let my court and my subjects extol my wisdom and goodness, and even my valour; well, and good—I will accept their homage. You alone have the right to laugh at it, and you will never betray me. But from this time I hand over to you my power. The king, my dear Pazza, will only be the first of your subjects, the faithful minister of your wishes. You shall be the composer, and I will be the performer. The applause will be for me according to custom, and I will pay you for it in love.”

“My husband,” replied Pazza, “pray do not talk thus.”

“I mean what I say,” returned the king, eagerly. “I want you to take the command, and I intend nothing to be done in my kingdom except according to your will.”

“Sire,” said Pazza, “I am your wife and your servant, and it is my duty to obey you.”

And then, says the chronicle, they lived happily ever after. They loved each other tenderly, and had a great many children; and that is how the best stories always end.

THUMBKIN

(A FINNISH TALE)

CHAPTER I

ONCE upon a time there was a peasant who had three sons—Peter, Paul, and John. Peter was big, red-cheeked, and stupid; and Paul was thin, sallow, and envious; whilst John was brimful of fun and as fair as a woman, but such a tiny fellow that he could easily have hidden himself in his father's big boots; so he was nick-named Thumbkin. All the peasant's wealth consisted of his sons, he had nothing else besides, and it was a grand day in the cottage when a halfpenny was to be seen there. Rye was dear, and life very hard to these poor folk. From the time the three children could do any work, their father was always urging them to leave the hut where they were born, and go forth into the world to seek their fortune.

He used to say, "It may not be always easy to earn one's living away from home, but anyhow there is a chance of earning it; whilst here, the only thing one can look forward to is to die of hunger."

About a league from the hut stood the palace of the king, a magnificent building all of wood, with beautifully carved balconies and glazed windows. Lo and behold! one fine summer night, just in front of the windows, a great oak-tree sprang up, with such thick branches and foliage that it almost hid the palace. To cut down this giant tree was not an easy matter; there was not an axe that did not blunt itself against the trunk, and for every branch or root that was cut off two sprang up in its place. In vain the king promised three bags of silver to the man who would rid him of this inconvenient neighbour. Tired of the fruitless

struggle, the king at last was obliged to resign himself to having all the lamps in his palace lit in broad daylight.

That was not all; in this country streams issued out of the very stones, and yet there was no water to be had on the royal domain. In the summer the Court was obliged to wash their hands with beer, and their faces with mead. It was a crying shame; and the king had promised lands and money, with the title of marquis, to anyone who would dig a well in the courtyard of the castle deep enough to get water all the year round. But no one was able to earn the reward, for the palace stood on a hill, and a foot below the surface was a bed of granite.

The king could think of nothing else, and was determined not to be beaten, for though his kingdom was very small he was as obstinate as the Emperor of China. To attain his object he had great placards emblazoned with the royal arms posted up all over his dominions, by which he offered no less than the hand of the princess and the half of his kingdom to whoever should cut down the oak and dig the well. The princess was as beautiful as the day, and half the kingdom was not to be despised; so here was a bait rich enough to tempt more than one ambitious soul, and from Sweden and Norway, Denmark, Russia, the continent, and the adjacent islands, came a crowd of stout workmen, armed with axes and mattocks. But in vain they cut and hacked and chipped and dug, it was all labour lost. At every blow the oak became harder, and the granite no softer, so that the strongest had at last to give up in despair.

CHAPTER II

ONE day, after the king's proclamation, which completely turned everybody's head, had been a great deal under discussion, the three brothers asked themselves why they should not try their luck, if their father would give his consent. They never dreamed of success, and did not aspire either to the hand of the princess or to the half of the kingdom, but they thought they might find employment and a kind master at the Court or elsewhere. Their father approved of their project, so they started off for the king's palace.

As they journeyed Thumbkin ran along the side of the road with the swiftness of a greyhound, watching everything, studying everything, and ferreting about everywhere. Insects, wild flowers, and pebbles all attracted his attention. He was constantly stopping his brothers to ask them the why and the wherefore of everything; why the bees entered the calyxes of flowers, why the swallows skimmed along the streams, why the butterflies flew to and fro in zigzags. Peter burst out laughing at all these questions, and Paul shrugged his shoulders, and told Thumbkin to be silent, calling him a conceited and inquisitive fellow.

On their way they entered a great pine-wood, which covered a mountain side, and in the distance above them they heard the sound of an axe and the crash of falling branches.

"It surprises me that people should cut down trees on the summit of a mountain," said Thumbkin.

"I should be very much surprised if you were not surprised," replied Paul dryly. "Everything is marvellous to the ignorant."

"What a baby! One would think that you had never seen a wood-cutter," added Peter, patting his little brother on the cheek.

"All the same," said Thumbkin, "I am curious to see what is going on up there."

"Go and see," rejoined Paul, "and tire yourself out. It will be a lesson to you, conceited boy; you always want to know more than your elder brothers."

Thumbkin, without heeding this remark, set off to climb in the direction whence came the sound of the axe. When he reached the top of the mountain, what do you think he found? An enchanted axe which by itself was hewing down a tall and noble pine-tree.

"Good morning, Madam Axe," said Thumbkin. "Does it not tire you to hack away all by yourself at that old tree?"

"I have been waiting for you many years, my son," answered the axe.

"All right, here I am," rejoined Thumbkin, and he coolly took the axe and putting it into his big leathern wallet, lightly descended the mountain.

"And what marvel did our young master, who is so easily astonished, see up there?" inquired Paul, looking contemptuously at Thumbkin.

"It was an axe that we heard," answered the lad.

"I told you so," said Peter, "so your trouble was useless, and you would have done better to stay with us."

A little further on the road lay through masses of rock, and in the distance they heard above them a hard sound, like iron ringing against stone.

"I am surprised that people should be striking the rock up there," said Thumbkin.

"Really," said Paul, "the chicken is only just hatched, so he has never heard a woodpecker pecking at the old trunk of a tree before!"

"That's what it is," said Peter laughing, "it is



*An enchanted axe was hewing
down a pine-tree (P. 292)*

a woodpecker. Stay with us, youngster."

"All the same," replied Thumbkin, "I am curious to see what is going on up there."

And he climbed up the face of the rock on his hands and knees, whilst Peter and Paul laughed at him for his pains. When he reached the top, what do you think he found? An enchanted pickaxe, which all by itself was piercing the rock as easily as if it had been soft earth. At each stroke it went more than a foot into the ground.

"Good day, Madam Pickaxe," said Thumbkin. "Does it not tire you to be digging away all by yourself at that old rock?"

"I have been waiting for you a long time, my son," returned the pickaxe.

"All right, here I am," replied Thumbkin, and without more ado he took the pickaxe, undid the handle, and putting the two pieces into his big leathern bag, quickly descended the mountain.

"Pray, what miracle did his lordship see up there?" asked Paul, in a sneering tone.

"It *was* a pickaxe that we heard," answered the boy, and he walked on without saying anything more.

A little further on they came to a stream. The water was cool, and as clear as crystal, and our travellers being thirsty, each commenced to drink out of his hand.

"I am surprised there should be so much water in a valley like this," said Thumbkin. "I should like to know where this stream comes from."

"So the youngster does not know that streams issue out of the ground," sneered Paul.

"All the same," replied Thumbkin, "I am curious to see whence this water comes." And he set off to find the source of the stream, in spite of the jeers of his brothers. On and on he went, whilst the water grew less and less. When he reached the end of the valley, he saw, to his astonishment, the water bubbling up out of a walnut-shell.

"Good morrow, Madam Spring," cried Thumbkin. "Does it not tire you to spout away there all by yourself in that little corner?"

"I have been waiting for you for many years, my son," replied the walnut-shell.

"All right; here I am," said Thumbkin; and, taking the nut-shell, he stuffed it with moss, so that the water could not escape; then putting it into his wallet, he quickly rejoined his brothers.

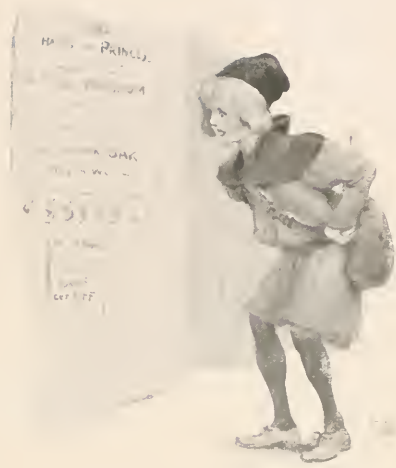
"Have you discovered the source of the stream now?" cried Peter, as soon as he caught sight of him.

"Yes," said Thumbkin; "it comes up out of a little hole."

"The child is too clever by half," said Paul; "we shall never be able to rear him."

"I have seen all I wanted to see, and have learned all I wanted to know, and that is enough for me," murmured Thumbkin, rubbing his hands.

CHAPTER III



*At the palace-gate hung the
great placard (P. 295)*

AT last they reached the king's palace. The oak was bigger and more umbrageous than ever: there was no well in the courtyard of the castle, and at the palace-gate there hung as usual the great placard which promised the hand of the princess and half the kingdom to the man—were he noble, peasant, or trader—who should achieve the two things on which the king had set his heart. However, since the king was wearied with so many fruitless efforts, which only served

to dishearten him, a smaller placard had been posted below the larger one, and on it was written in red letters the following announcement:—"Be it known that his majesty the king, in his exceeding goodness, has deigned to proclaim that whoever shall unsuccessfully attempt to cut down the oak or dig a well, shall have his ears cut off to teach him to know himself, which is the first step towards wisdom."

And in order that everybody might profit by this prudent advice, a couple of dozen ears had been nailed up round the placard for the encouragement of those who were wanting in humility. When Peter had read the proclamation he burst out laughing, twirled his moustaches, and looked complacently at his arms, on which the swelling veins stood out like thick cords; he then twice flourished his woodman's axe round his head, and at a blow cut off one of the thickest branches of the enchanted tree.

In a moment two others sprouted in its place, each thicker and sturdier than the first; whereupon the king's guards seized the unfortunate woodman, and then and there cut off his ears.

"You are only a blunderer," said Paul to his brother; and taking the hatchet in his turn, he walked slowly round the tree, and seeing a root which showed above the ground, he cut it off at a single blow. In an instant two enormous roots appeared in its place, and a vigorous shoot sprang up from each.

"Seize the fool!" cried the enraged king; "and as he did not profit by his brother's example, cut off both his ears close to his cheek."

This was no sooner said than done; but this double family misfortune did not seem to daunt Thumbkin. He approached with a firm step to try his luck.

"Send that little shrimp away!" exclaimed the king; "and if he makes any resistance, cut off his ears. He will learn a lesson, and we shall be spared the consequences of his folly."

"Pardon me, your majesty," returned Thumbkin; "a king must abide by his word, and I have the right to make the attempt. There will be time enough to cut off my ears when I have failed."

"Away with you, then!" said the king, sighing; "but take care that I do not have your nose off into the bargain."

From the depths of his leathern wallet Thumbkin drew out the enchanted axe; it was almost as big as himself, and he had some difficulty in setting it on end with the handle resting on the ground.

"Hew away! hew away!" he cried.

Instantly the axe chopped and hewed right and left: trunk, branches and roots were all reduced to little bits in a quarter of an hour; and there was so much wood that the whole Court was supplied with firing for a twelvemonth.

When the tree was cut down, Thumbkin approached the king, at whose side sat the princess, and, making them both a graceful bow, said: "Is your majesty satisfied with his faithful subject?"

"Yes," replied the king; "but I want my well, so take care of your ears."

"If your majesty will have the kindness to point out where you wish it to be," said Thumbkin, "I will try once more to give you satisfaction."

Everybody repaired to the courtyard of the palace, where the king took his seat, with the princess at his side. The latter began to regard rather anxiously the insignificant



' The pickaxe made the granite fly in all directions (P. 297)

little husband who seemed in store for her, and who was so unlike the tall and gallant knight she had seen in her dreams.

Thumbkin quietly drew the enchanted pickaxe out of his wallet, and, fixing it on the handle, placed it on the ground at the spot indicated.

"Pick away! pick away!" he cried.

Immediately the pickaxe made the granite fly in all directions, and in less than a quarter of an hour it had dug a well more than a hundred feet deep.

"Does your majesty," said Thumbkin, "consider the well deep enough?"

"Yes, certainly," answered the king; "but there is no water yet."

"If your majesty will grant me one minute," replied Thumbkin, "your just impatience shall be satisfied."

Whereupon he took the walnut-shell wrapped in moss out of his wallet, and placed it in a great stone basin, where, for lack of water, flowers had been planted. Having fixed the nut-shell firmly in the earth, "Spout away! spout away!" he cried.

Immediately the water gushed up out of the midst of the flowers with a gentle murmur, and fell again in a sparkling shower, spreading such coolness around that the courtiers almost caught cold; and it flowed in such great abundance that in a quarter of an hour the well was filled, and it was necessary to dig a conduit in great haste to carry off the threatening overflow.

"Sire," said Thumbkin, as he knelt on one knee before the royal foot-stool, "does your majesty consider that I have fulfilled your conditions?"

"Yes, Marquis," replied the king; "I am ready to give you half my kingdom, or to pay you the equivalent in money by means of a tax, to which my faithful subjects will only be too happy to submit; but to give you my daughter, and to call you son-in-law, is another matter—for that does not depend upon myself alone."

"What must I do?" demanded Thumbkin, proudly, with his arms akimbo, as he gazed at the princess.

"You shall know to-morrow," answered the king; "in the meantime you are my guest, and the finest chamber in the palace will be prepared for you."

The king retired, and Thumbkin hastened to his two brothers, who, with their close-cropped ears, looked like terriers.

"Oh, brothers!" he exclaimed, "you see I was right to be surprised at everything, and to seek to find out the reason of it all."

"It was all luck," replied Paul, coldly; "fortune is blind, and does not always favour the most worthy."

"You have done very well, my boy," said Peter. "With or without ears, I am delighted at your good fortune, and I only wish our father were here."

Thumbkin carried his two brothers off with him, and as he was in favour at court a chamberlain found employment for them at once in the castle.

CHAPTER IV

WHEN the king returned to his apartments he could not sleep. A son-in-law like Thumbkin was not at all to his taste, and he tried to think how he could avoid keeping his promise and yet not appear to break his word. For an honest person this would have been difficult to manage, but a knave never hesitates to sacrifice his honour rather than his interest when both are at stake.

In his trouble the king sent for Peter and Paul, for they alone could tell him the parentage, character, and habits of Thumbkin. Peter praised his little brother, which fact did not much please his majesty; but Paul put the king in a better humour by proving to him that Thumbkin was only an adventurer, and that it was ridiculous for a great king to consider himself under any obligation to a peasant.

"The boy is vain," added the wicked brother. "He thinks himself big enough to face a giant. Now there lives a troll¹ near here who is the terror of the neighbourhood, and who carries off the cattle for ten leagues round; Thumbkin has often said that if he chose he could make this monster his servant."

"That we shall see," said the king; and, dismissing the two brothers, he slept peacefully.

The next day, in the presence of all his court, he sent for Thumbkin, who came looking as fair as a lily, as fresh as a rose, and as smiling as the morn.

"My son-in-law," said the king, lingering on the words, "a fine fellow like you cannot wed the princess without

¹ Amongst the Scandinavians trolls are giants inhabiting the lakes and forests. Probably our word "droll" is derived from "troll," the original meaning of the word having gradually altered in the course of time.

giving her a house worthy of her. Now in these woods lives a troll who is twenty feet high, it is said, and who eats an ox every morning for his breakfast. With a laced coat, a three-cornered hat, gold epaulettes, and a halberd of fifteen feet high, he would make a porter fit for a king's palace. My daughter begs you to make her this little present, after which she will see about giving you her hand."

"It is not an easy thing you ask of me," said Thumbkin; "but to please your majesty I will do my best."

He went down to the buttery, where he put the enchanted axe, together with a loaf, a piece of cheese, and a knife, into his big leathern wallet; then throwing it over his shoulder he started for the woods. Peter wept, whilst Paul smiled and congratulated himself that once away his brother would never return.

When Thumbkin entered the forest he looked to right and left, but the grasses prevented his seeing anything; then he began to sing at the top of his voice.

"Here I am!" cried the giant, with a terrible growl. "Here I am! Wait a bit; I shall eat you up at a mouthful."

"Do not hurry yourself, old fellow," answered Thumbkin in his little sharp voice; "I can spare you an hour."

When the troll reached Thumbkin he turned his head on every side, and was much astonished not to see anyone; at last, casting down his eyes, he espied a boy seated on a felled tree, holding a big leathern wallet between his knees.

"Was it you that waked me out of my nap, you young rascal!" said he, rolling his flaming eyes.

"Even so, my fine fellow," replied Thumbkin. "I am come to engage you as my servant."

"Ha! ha!" roared the giant, who was as stupid as he was tall. "You make me laugh. I am going to toss you into a crow's nest that I see up there, and that will teach you not to ramble through my forest."

"Your forest!" replied the lad; "it is more mine than yours. If you say a word, I will fell it to the ground in a moment."

"Ha! ha!" said the giant, "I should like to see you do it, my pretty fellow."



R. DIXON. 1908

THE GIGANTIC MAN WHO WAS SEEN IN THE FOREST OF ST. MARTIN'S

Thumbkin placed the axe on the ground and cried, "Hew away! hew away!"

Immediately the axe cut and lopped and hewed away, felling down the trees right and left, whilst the branches rattled down upon the troll's head as thick as hailstones.

"Enough! enough!" said the giant, who was beginning to be frightened. "Do not destroy my forest. Who are you?"

"I am the famous magician, Thumbkin, and if I only say the word my axe will cut off your head. You do not yet know the man with whom you have to deal. Remain where you are."

The giant stopped short, much perplexed by what he had seen. Thumbkin, who was hungry, opened his leathern wallet and took out his bread and cheese.

"What is that white stuff?" inquired the troll, who had never seen cheese before.

"It is stone," replied Thumbkin, showing all his teeth as he bit it.

"Can you eat stone?" said the giant.

"Yes, it is my usual food, and that is why I do not grow as you do who eat oxen; but, small as I am, I am ten times stronger than you are. Lead me to your house."

The troll was conquered. He walked in front of Thumbkin like a big dog before a child, and brought him to his immense hut.

"Listen to me," said Thumbkin. "One of us two must be the master and the other the servant. Let us make a bargain. If I cannot do what you can, I will be your slave; and if you cannot do what I can, you shall be mine."

"Agreed," said the troll. "I should like to have a clever little fellow like you for my servant. Thinking tires me, and you are far sharper than I am. To begin with, here are my two buckets, go and fetch some water for the broth."

Thumbkin raised his head and looked at the buckets; they were two enormous tuns, each ten feet high and six feet across, which he was more likely to drown himself in than to move.

"Ha! ha!" roared the giant; "you are already in a fix. My son, do as I do, and go and fetch the water."

"What is the good?" said Thumbkin. "I can run and

fetch the spring itself and throw it into the pot, which will take less time."

"No, no," exclaimed the troll; "you have already spoiled my forest, I will not let you take away my spring. Make up the fire whilst I go and fetch the water."

As soon as the pot was hung up, the giant threw into it an ox cut up in pieces, and a cart-load of cabbages and carrots. He skimmed the broth with a frying pan and tasted it more than once.

"Now to table," he said; "we shall see if you can do as I do. For my part, I feel in the humour to eat an ox whole, and you into the bargain. You will do for my dessert."

"To table, then," said Thumbkin; but before sitting down he slipped under his doublet his great leathern wallet, which reached from his neck to his feet.

At dinner the troll ate voraciously, and Thumbkin did not do badly either; but it was into his bag that he kept ladling the meat and cabbages and carrots.

"Ugh!" said the giant, "I cannot eat any more. I am going to undo a button of my waistcoat."

"You are not eating much," cried Thumbkin, stuffing half a cabbage under his chin.

"Ugh!" said the giant, "I must undo another button. You must have the digestion of an ostrich, my son. I can easily see you are accustomed to eat stones."

"You do not half eat, lazybones!" cried Thumbkin, stuffing a great piece of beef under his chin.

"Ugh!" groaned the giant, "I must undo a third button. I feel suffocated. How are you getting on, magician?"

"Pooh!" replied Thumbkin, "nothing easier than to get a little air." And taking his knife he ripped up his doublet and his wallet.

"Now it is your turn," he said; "do as I do."

"I am your humble servant," answered the troll. "I prefer to submit to your orders, for I cannot digest cold steel."

Forthwith the giant kissed Thumbkin's hand in token of submission; then lifting his little master on one shoulder and a big sack of gold on the other, he marched off to the palace.

CHAPTER V

THERE was a banquet taking place at the castle, and nobody was thinking of Thumbkin any more than if the giant had eaten him up a week before, when suddenly a frightful noise was heard outside and the castle shook to its foundations. It was the troll, who finding the great gate too low for him, had kicked it down.

Everybody ran to the window, the king among the rest, and there they saw Thumbkin quietly seated on the shoulder of his terrible servant.

Our hero stepped upon the first-floor balcony, and bending on one knee before his betrothed, said—

“Princess, you wished for one slave, and here are two.”

This gallant speech was inserted the next day in the *Court Gazette*, but at the moment when it was uttered it rather embarrassed the king. He did not know what to answer, and drawing the princess aside, he said—



The Princess

“My daughter, there is no longer any reason why I should refuse your hand to this valiant young man; sacrifice yourself for my sake. Princesses do not marry to please themselves.”

“Permit me to say, my father,” returned the princess, making a courtesy, “that, princess or not, every girl likes to marry according to her own fancy. Let me defend my rights my own way. Thumbkin,” she added, raising her voice, “you are brave and lucky, but that alone is not sufficient to win a lady’s regard.”

"I know it," answered Thumbkin, "for over and above that, one must obey her slightest wish and humour all her caprices."

"You have plenty of wit,"-replied the princess, "and since you are so good at guessing riddles, I propose a final trial, which you ought not to fear, as you will only have me for an antagonist. Let us enter the lists to see who is the cleverer. My hand shall be the prize in the contest."

Thumbkin made a profound bow, and all the court repaired to the throne-room, where, to the general alarm, they found the troll seated on the ground. The throne-room was only fifteen feet high, so the poor giant could not stand upright, but at a sign from his young master he came on his hands and knees to his side, proud and happy to obey him.

"Let us begin," said the princess, "with a game. People say that women are not afraid of telling lies. Let us see which of us two can tell the better lies, but the first who says 'That is too bad,' will be the loser."

"Whether to tell fibs in fun, or to speak the truth in earnest," answered Thumbkin, "I am always at the orders of your royal highness."

"I am sure," began the princess, "that you have not such a fine large farm as we have. When two shepherds blow their horns at the opposite ends of our fields they cannot hear each other."

"What of that?" said Thumbkin, "my father's estate is such a size that if a heifer of two months old goes in at one entrance, though she walks straight on without stopping, she goes out at the other a full grown milch cow."

"That does not surprise me," replied the princess; "but your bull is not so big as ours. If a man sits upon each of his horns, the two men cannot touch each other with a goad twenty feet long."

"What of that," said Thumbkin, "my father's bull has such a large head that a farm-servant seated on one of his horns cannot even see a servant perched on the other."

"That does not surprise me," said the princess; "but you have not as much milk as we have, for every day we fill twenty great tuns which are each a hundred feet high, and every week we make a mountain of cheese which is every bit as high as the great Egyptian pyramid."

"What of that?" returned Thumbkin; "in my father's dairy they make such large cheeses that our mare having fallen into the press, we did not find her again until after a voyage of seven days; and the poor animal had broken its back; in order to be able to use it still, I was obliged to replace its backbone by a great pine trunk, which answered the purpose capitally. One fine morning a branch sprouted out of the pine tree, and grew to such a height, that in climbing up it I reached the sky. There I saw a lady in white, who was spinning the foam of the sea to make a cobweb. I wished to lay hold of it, when snap it went; the thread broke, and I fell into a mouse's hole. Who should I see there but your father and my mother, who were each twirling distaffs, and as your father was clumsy, my mother gave him such a box on the ears that it made his moustache tremble."

"That is too bad," exclaimed the princess in a passion. "My father has never subjected himself to such an indignity."

"She has said 'That is too bad,' master," exclaimed the giant, "the princess is ours."

CHAPTER VI

"NOT yet," said the princess, blushing. "Thumbkin, I have three riddles to ask you; guess them, and I shall have nothing to do but obey my father. Tell me what is always falling and yet is never broken?"

"Ah!" said Thumbkin, "my mother taught me that long ago. It is a waterfall."

"That is very good," cried the giant; "who could have guessed that?"

"Tell me," continued the princess, in a voice broken with emotion, "what is that which every day makes the same journey and yet never retraces his steps?"

"Ah!" replied Thumbkin, "I learned that in the nursery; it is the sun."

"Very good," said the princess, pale with anger. "I have one more question to ask you. What is that that I do not think and you do? What is the thing we both of us think, and what is the thing that neither of us think?"

Thumbkin looked down and reflected about his answer. He was puzzled at last.

"Master," said the troll, "if the thing is too difficult, do not rack your brains; only give me a sign, and I will carry off the princess in a minute."

"Be silent, slave," returned Thumbkin; "strength can do nothing, my poor friend; you ought to know that by this time. Leave me to try another way. Madam," said he, breaking a profound silence, "I hardly dare guess, and yet in this riddle I fancy I have a glimpse of my happiness. I had dared to think that your words would be all clear to me, but you were right in thinking the contrary. You are good enough to think I am not unworthy of your favour, but I am not bold enough to think so. Finally," he added, smiling, "what we both think is, that there are more stupid people in the world than we are, and what we neither of us think is that the king, your august father, and this troll have as much——"

"Silence," said the princess, "here is my hand."

"What was it you thought about me?" cried the king. "I should be glad to know."

"Dear father," answered the princess, throwing her arms round his neck, "we think that you are the wisest of kings and the best of men."

"Well, I knew that before," said the king. "Meanwhile, something must be done for my faithful subjects. Thumbkin, I present you with a dukedom."

"Long live Duke Thumbkin! Long live my master!" cried the giant in such a voice, that it was as if a thunderbolt had fallen on the house. Happily there was no harm done beyond the fright, and the breakage of a dozen panes of glass.

CHAPTER VII

IT is unnecessary to describe the wedding of the princess and Thumbkin, for all weddings are much alike. Nevertheless it may be mentioned that the presence of the troll added much to the festivities. Thus on returning from church, in the exuberance of his joy, the faithful giant could do nothing better to express his feelings than to put the wedding coach upon his head, and so convey the newly-married couple to the palace, which was rather alarming for the bride, and a sight not to be seen every day.

In the evening there were universal rejoicings. Banquets, epithalamiums, illuminations, and fireworks gave vent to the public enthusiasm.

In the castle everyone laughed, sang, danced, and enjoyed themselves with one exception, and that was Paul, who hid himself in a corner and kept aloof from the happy crowd. He thought himself lucky in having had his ears cut off so that he could not hear his brother's praises, and he only wished he were also blind, so as not to see the happy faces of the bride and bridegroom. At last he rushed off to the woods and was eaten by bears; which is the fate I should like to befall all envious people.

Thumbkin was so small that it was very difficult to treat him with much respect, but he was so affable and gentle that he soon won his wife's love, and the affection of the entire people. After the death of his father-in-law he occupied the throne for fifty-two years, beloved and adored by his grateful subjects, whose happiness and well-being were the object of his life. History tells us that he was so clever that he always guessed how best to assist or please each one of his subjects—besides, he was so kind-hearted that the pleasure of others was his greatest happiness.

THE CASTLE OF LIFE

CHAPTER I



Grazioso

ONCE upon a time, there lived at Salerno a good old woman, a fishwife by trade, whose sole treasure and support was her grandson, a boy twelve years old. He was a poor orphan, whose father had been drowned one stormy night, and whose mother had died of grief. Grazioso, for so he was called, had but his grandmother to love.

He used to go with her every morning before dawn to gather shellfish, or drag a net along the shore, while he waited for the time when he should be strong enough to go fishing by himself and brave those waters which had been the death of his parents. He was so handsome and engaging that from the moment he entered the town with his basket of fish on his head everybody ran after him, and he sold all his fish before even arriving at the market.

Unhappily his grandmother was very old; she had only one tooth left in her head; her eyes were so dim that she could scarcely see, and her head shook with palsy. Each morning found her weaker, and increased her difficulty in

getting about, and she felt her end was drawing near. So every evening before Grazioso wrapped himself in his blanket and lay down on the floor she used to give him good advice to prepare him for the time when he should be left all alone. She used to tell him which fishermen to be friends with, and which were better avoided, and, how, if he were always gentle and industrious, wise and prudent, he would make his way in the world, and finish by having a boat and nets of his own. The poor boy refused to listen to all this wisdom. As soon as the old woman began to speak in a grave voice, he would say—

“Grandmother, grandmother, thou must never leave me. I have arms, and I am strong, and soon I shall be able to work for us both; but if, on returning from fishing, I should not find thee at home, how could I live?”

And then he would embrace her, weeping.

“My child,” said the old woman, one day, “I shall not leave thee as solitary as thou fearest. When I am gone thou wilt have two protectresses that a prince might envy. Some time ago I rendered a service to two great ladies, who will never forget thee when the time comes for thee to call them to thine aid, which will now be soon.”

“Who are these two great ladies?” inquired Grazioso, who had only seen fishwives in his grandmother’s hut.

“They are two fairies,” replied his grandmother; “two great fairies—the fairy of the water and the fairy of the woods. Listen to me, my child; this is a secret that I must confide to thee—a secret that thou must keep as I have done, and which will ensure thee fortune and happiness. Ten years ago, the same year thy father died and thy mother too left us, I had gone out at daybreak to catch the crabs asleep in the sand, and was stooping down, hidden by a rock, when I saw a halcyon flying gently towards the shore. It is a sacred bird, which one must be careful not to offend; so I let it alight, and never stirred for fear I should scare it away. At the same time, from a cleft in the mountain, I saw a beautiful green adder appear, and glide along the sands toward the bird. When they were near to one another, neither seemed surprised at the meeting,

and the adder twined itself round the neck of the halcyon as if it was embracing it tenderly, and thus they remained intertwined some minutes, when they abruptly separated, the adder to re-enter the cliff, and the bird to plunge in the wave, which carried it away.

"Much astonished at what I had seen, I returned the next day at the same hour, and at the same hour the halcyon alighted on the sands, and the adder issued from its retreat. There was no doubt that they were fairies, and probably fairies under enchantment to whom I might render a service.

"But how? To show myself would be to displease them, and probably endanger my life. It would be better to wait a favourable opportunity, which luck might bring about at any time. Meanwhile for a month I kept myself out of sight, being present every morning at the same spectacle; when, one day, I saw a great black cat, which was the first to appear on the scene, and hide itself behind a rock close to me. A black cat could be nothing else than a magician according to what I had heard in my youth, so I resolved to watch it. And indeed scarcely had the halcyon and the adder embraced each other, than the cat stood erect, with his tail bristling, and sprang on the innocent pair. It was now my turn to throw myself on the assassin, who had already hold of his victim in his murderous claws. I seized him in spite of his struggles, and though my hands were covered with blood, I then and there pitilessly, knowing with whom I had to deal, took the knife that I used for opening oysters and cut off the monster's head and paws and tail, awaiting with all confidence the result of my act of devotion.

"I had not long to wait. As soon as I had thrown the creature's body into the sea, I saw before me two beautiful ladies, one with a crown of white feathers, and the other with a scarf made of snake's skin; they were, as I have told you, the fairy of the water and the fairy of the woods. Enchanted by a wicked Jinn, who had found out their secret, they were obliged to remain bird and snake until some generous hand should restore them to liberty, and it was to me they owed freedom and power.

“Ask what thou wilt,’ they said, ‘and thy wishes shall be fulfilled.’

“I thought how that I was old, and that I had had too hard a life to wish for it over again; while as for thee, my child, the day would come when nothing would be too good for thee to desire, when thou wouldst wish to be rich, noble, a general, a marquis, and perhaps a prince. ‘When that day comes,’ I thought to myself, ‘I shall be able to give him everything; a single moment of such happiness would repay me for eighty years of trouble and misery.’ I then thanked the fairies, and begged them to keep their goodwill for me until the time came when I should need it. The fairy of the water then took a small feather from her crown, and the fairy of the woods a scale from the snake’s skin.

“‘Good woman,’ they said, ‘when thou hast need of us, put this feather and this scale into a vessel of pure water, and, at the same time, call upon us as thou formest thy wish. Even if we should be at the ends of the earth, thou shalt see us before thee in an instant, ready to pay our debt of to-day.’ I bent my head in token of gratitude, and when I raised it everything had disappeared; there were no longer any wounds or blood upon my hands, and I should have thought my late adventure was all a dream if I had not had in my hand the piece of snake’s skin and the halcyon’s feather.”

“And these treasures,” said Grazioso, “where are they, grandmother?”

“My child,” replied the old woman, “I have hidden them carefully, as I did not wish to show them to thee until the day when thou shouldst be a man and ready to use them; but since death is about to part us, the moment has come to give thee these precious talismans. Thou wilt find, at the bottom of the bin, a small wooden box hidden under some rags; in this box is a small cardboard one wrapped up in tow. Open this box and thou wilt find the scale and feather carefully wrapped in cotton wool. Be careful not to hurt them, and carry them tenderly and I will tell thee what next thou must do.”

Grazioso carried the box to the poor woman, who could

no longer leave her pallet, and she took the two things in her hand.

"Now," said she to her grandson, handing them back to him, "place a dish full of water in the middle of the room, and lay the scale and the feather in the water and then wish: ask for fortune, greatness, wit, power—anything thou desirest; only, as I feel I am dying, embrace me, my child, before thou formest the wish that is to part us forever, and receive my blessing for the last time. It will be yet another talisman to bring thee happiness."

But, to the old woman's surprise, Grazioso did not approach, either to embrace her or to ask her blessing. He quickly placed the dishful of water in the middle of the room, threw the feather and the scale into it, and cried from the bottom of his heart, "I wish grandmother to live forever! Appear, fairy of the water! I wish grandmother to live forever! Appear, fairy of the woods!"

Thereupon the water bubbled and bubbled, and the dish became a great basin that was almost too big for the cottage to hold; and from the depths of the basin Grazioso saw two beautiful young women rise, whom he recognized at once as fairies by their wands. One had a wreath of leaves and earrings of diamonds, which were like acorns in their cup; she was dressed in an olive green gown, and a scarf of snake's skin was fastened over her right shoulder. This was the fairy of the woods. As to the fairy of the waters, she wore a wreath of reeds and a white gown edged with grebe, and a blue scarf which, from time to time, blew over her head and filled out like the sail of a boat. Great ladies as they were, they both looked smilingly on Grazioso, who had taken refuge at his grandmother's side and stood trembling with fear and admiration.

"Here we are, my child," said the fairy of the water, who was spokeswoman, being the elder. "We have heard what you said; your wish does you credit, but if we can help you in the project you desire, you alone can execute it. We can easily prolong your grandmother's life for some time, but to make her live forever you must go to the Castle of Life, four long days' journey from here towards

Sicily. There the fountain of immortality is to be found. If you can accomplish each of these four days' journeys without turning out of your road, and if, on arriving at the castle, you can answer the three questions that an invisible voice will ask you, you will receive there all that you



From the depths of the basin Grazioso saw two beautiful women rise (P. 312)

desire. But, my child, reflect well before you set out; there are many dangers on the way. If ever you fail to reach the end of your day's journey, not only will you not obtain what you desire, but you will never leave that country, from which no traveller returns."

"Madam," replied Grazioso, "I will start."

"But," said the fairy of the woods, "you are very young, my boy, and you do not even know the way."

"It does not matter," replied Grazioso, "you will not forsake me, noble ladies; and to save my grandmother I would go to the ends of the earth."

"Wait," said the fairy of the woods, and, breaking off the lead from a broken window-pane, she placed it in the hollow of her hand. Whereupon the lead began to melt and to bubble without the fairy appearing in the slightest degree inconvenienced by the heat. She then threw the metal on the hearth, where it congealed into a thousand different forms.

"What do you see in all that?" asked the fairy of Grazioso.

"Madam," he replied, after looking at it attentively, "I think I see a spaniel with a long tail and long ears."

"Call it," said the fairy.

Immediately a bark was heard, and from the middle of the metal a black and tan dog issued, which began at once to jump and gambol round Grazioso.

"This will be your companion," said the fairy. "You must call him Fidelio, and he will show you the way; but I warn you that it is for you to lead him, and not for him to lead you. If you make him obey you you will find him of great service; but if you obey him he will bring you into trouble."

"And I," said the fairy of the waters, "shall I give you nothing, my poor Grazioso?"

And, gazing round her, the lady caught sight of a piece of paper, which she pushed on to the hearth with her little foot. The paper caught fire, and when the flame had burned out, thousands of little sparks were to be seen following each other like nuns on Christmas Eve all on their way to chapel with wax tapers in their hands. The fairy watched all these sparks carefully, and when the last was nearly out, she blew on the paper. Suddenly the little cry of a bird was heard, and a swallow flew out very much frightened and dashed itself against the corner of the room, and finally finished by alighting on Grazioso's shoulder.

"This shall be also your companion," said the fairy of the water. "You must call it Pensive, and it will show you the way; but I warn you that you must lead it, and it must not lead you. If you make it obey you it will serve you well; but if you obey it, it will be your ruin. Move that black cinder," added the kind fairy of the water, "perhaps you will find something there."

Grazioso obeyed, and from under the ashes of the paper he took a bottle of rock crystal which shone like a diamond.

"In that," said the fairy, "you must bring away the water of immortality. It would break any vessel made by mortal hands."

Beside the bottle Grazioso found a dagger with a three-edged blade, a very different thing to the stiletto which had belonged to his fisherman father, and which he had been forbidden to touch. With such a weapon he could brave the fiercest foe.

"Sister, you shall not outdo me in generosity," said the other fairy, and taking a straw from the only chair there was in the house, she blew upon it. The straw swelled at once, and in less time than it takes to tell it formed a beautiful gun, all inlaid with gold and mother-of-pearl. A second straw became a cartouch-box, which Grazioso at once put on, and which became him wonderfully; indeed he looked like a prince equipped for hunting. So handsome was he that his grandmother cried with joy and emotion at sight of him.

The two fairies then disappeared, and Grazioso embraced the good old woman, telling her to be sure and wait for him, and then knelt down to receive her blessing. His grandmother gave him some parting good advice, and told him to be patient, just, and charitable, and, above all, never to leave the right road. "Not for my sake," added the old woman, "who am quite ready to die, and only sorry for the wish thou hast formed, but for thee, my child, so that thou shouldst come back. I do not wish to die without thee to close my eyes."

It was late, and Grazioso laid himself down on the ground, too excited, as he thought, to sleep. But sleep

soon overtook him. He slept all night, while his grandmother watched her dear boy's face, lighted up by the flickering light of the lamp, and was never weary of admiring it.

CHAPTER II

VERY early the next morning, at sunrise, the swallow began to twitter, and Fidelio to pull at Grazioso's blanket. "Let us start, master, let us start," said his two companions in their language, which Grazioso could understand, thanks to the fairies. "The sea is already sparkling on the shore, the birds sing, the flies buzz, the flowers open to the sun. Let us start, it is quite time."

Grazioso embraced his grandmother for the last time, and set off on the road which leads to Pæstum. Pensive flew from right to left, chasing the gnats, and Fidelio gambolled about his young master, or ran on in front of him. They were scarcely two leagues from the town when Grazioso saw Fidelio talking to some ants. These were walking in regular companies, dragging all their provisions along with them.

"Where are you going?" inquired Grazioso of them, and they answered—

"To the Castle of Life."

A little further on Pensive met some grasshoppers, who were also on their travels with the bees and butterflies. All were on their way to the Castle of Life to drink of the fountain of immortality. They walked in company like people going the same road. Pensive brought a young butterfly to Grazioso, which chatted to him very pleasantly. Youth makes friends quickly, and at the end of an hour the two companies were inseparable.

To travel straight on is not the way of butterflies, and Grazioso's little friend was constantly losing itself among the flowers. Grazioso, who had never known freedom before, nor seen so many flowers nor such sunshine, followed all the zigzags of the butterfly, and no more troubled himself about the day than if it were to last

forever. But at the end of some leagues his new friend felt tired.

"Do not let us go any farther," it said to Grazioso. "Look how lovely it is here, and how sweet the flowers are, and how these fields scent the air! Let us stay here. This is enjoying life!"

"Let us go on," said Fidelio, "we have a long journey before us and are only at the beginning."

"Let us go on," said Pensive, "the sky is clear and the horizon wide; let us go forward."

Grazioso reflected, and then spoke wisely to the butterfly, which was always fluttering here and there, but to no purpose.

"What does it matter?" said the insect. "Yesterday I was a caterpillar, this evening I shall be nothing, and I wish to enjoy myself to-day," and he alighted on a full-blown Pæstum rose.

The scent was so strong that the poor butterfly was suffocated. Grazioso sought in vain to bring it back to life, and after weeping over it, he put a pin through it and placed it in his hat like a cockade.

Toward noon it was the grasshoppers' turn to stop.

"Let us sing," they said. "We shall soon be overpowered by the heat if we attempt to struggle against the noontide sun. It is so pleasant to enjoy a comfortable rest! Come, Grazioso, we will amuse you and you shall sing with us."

"Listen to them," said Pensive, "they sing so well."

But Fidelio would not stop; a youthful ardour burned in his veins, and he barked so much that Grazioso forsook the grasshoppers to run after his importunate dog.

When evening came Grazioso met a bee, laden with spoil.

"Where are you going?" he said.

"I am going home," answered the bee, "and have no wish to leave my hive."

"What!" replied Grazioso, "industrious as you are, are you going to do as the grasshoppers, and abandon your search after immortality?"

"Your castle is too far distant," replied the bee. "I have not your ambition. My daily work is sufficient for me. I understand nothing about your travels. As for me, work is my life."

Grazioso was a little grieved to lose so many travelling companions the first day, but on thinking how easily he had reached the first halting place, his heart was glad. He caressed Fidelio, caught some flies, which Pensive took from his hand, and, lying down to sleep full of hope, he dreamed of his grandmother and the two fairies.

CHAPTER III

THE next day, at sunrise, Pensive awoke her young master.

"Let us start," she said. "The sea already sparkles on the shore, the birds are singing, the flies buzzing, the flowers opening to the sun. Let us start, it is high time."

"One moment," replied Fidelio. "The journey is not a long one; before noon we shall see the temples of Pæstum, where we are to halt to-night."

"The ants are already on the way," returned Pensive. "The road is more difficult than yesterday, and the weather is very sultry. We had better start."

Grazioso had seen his grandmother in a dream smiling on him, so he set off on his journey with greater ardour even than the day before. It was a splendid day; to the right the blue waves gently broke on the sand, while on the left, in the distance, were rose-tinted mountains. The ground was covered with flowers, and the road bordered with aloe, orange-trees, and acanthus, and over all a cloudless sky.

Grazioso, full of pleasure and hope, felt himself already at the end of his travels. Fidelio bounded through the fields, startling the frightened partridges, while Pensive lost herself in the ether, revelling in the sunlight. Suddenly among the reeds, Grazioso caught sight of a beautiful young doe, which was looking at him with great soft eyes as if she were calling to him.

As the boy approached the doe sprang away, but not to any distance. Three times she did the same thing, as if to allure Grazioso to the chase.



Grazioso caught sight of a beautiful young doe (P. 318)

"Let us follow her," said Fidelio. "I will cut off her escape, and we will soon catch her."

"Where is Pensive?" said the boy.

"What does it matter, master?" returned Fidelio. "It

is done in a minute. Trust to me, I was born for hunting, and the doe shall be ours."

Grazioso did not wait to be asked twice. While Fidelio made a *détour*, he went after the doe, who would stand waiting between the trees as if to let herself be taken, and then bound away as soon as the sportsman attempted to lay hands on her.

"Courage, master!" exclaimed Fidelio, dislodging it; but with a toss of her head the doe threw the dog into the air, and fled away like the wind.

Grazioso dashed forward in pursuit. Fidelio, with eyes aflame and hanging tongue, ran and barked like a mad dog; they leaped over hedges and ditches and through brush-wood—nothing stopped them. The doe, tired out, was losing ground, so Grazioso redoubled his exertions; already his hand was stretched out to seize his prey, when all at once the ground gave way beneath his feet, and he rolled along with his unfortunate companion into a pitfall that had been covered over with branches.

He had not recovered from his fall when the doe, approaching the edge of the hole, cried—

"You are betrayed. I am the wife of the wolf-king, who will eat you both up."

So saying she disappeared.

"Master," said Fidelio, "the fairy was right in warning you not to follow me; we have been very foolish, and it is I who have been your ruin."

"At least," said Grazioso, "we will defend our lives."

And taking his rifle he put in it a double charge so as to be ready for the wolf-king. Then, calmer, he inspected the deep ditch into which he had fallen; it was too high for him to attempt to get out of it, and in this hole he must await his death. Fidelio understood his master's thoughts.

"Sir," said he, "if you would take me up in your arms and throw me up with all your strength, perhaps I might get to the edge, and once out of this I could help you."

Grazioso had not much hope. Three times he tried to push up Fidelio, and three times the poor animal fell back.

At last the fourth time the dog managed to catch hold of some roots, and with the help of his teeth and paws succeeded in getting out of the pit. He immediately pushed down into the ditch some branches that he found lying by the edge.

"Master," said he, "stick these branches into the ground and make a ladder of them. Make haste, make haste," he added, "I hear the howling of the wolf-king!"

Grazioso was very clever and agile. Indignation doubled his strength, and in less than a minute he was out. He then settled his dagger in his belt, changed the cap in his gun, and placing himself behind a tree, awaited the enemy with a firm front.

Suddenly he heard a horrible cry, a dreadful animal with great fangs like boars' tusks was coming with huge bounds toward him. With trembling hands Grazioso took aim and fired. The shot struck home, and the animal fell back howling, but he sprang up again directly.

"Load your gun again; make haste, master!" cried Fidelio, who threw himself courageously on the monster, and caught him by the neck with his teeth.

The wolf had only to shake his head to throw the poor dog to the ground. He could have swallowed him at one mouthful if Fidelio had not slipped out of his jaw, leaving an ear behind him. It was now Grazioso's turn to save his companion. He advanced boldly and fired his second shot, taking his aim well. The wolf fell, but, raising himself for one last effort, he threw himself on the sportsman, who fell beneath him. On receiving this tremendous blow Grazioso gave himself up for lost, but without losing his presence of mind, and calling the good fairies to his aid he drew his dagger and plunged it into the creature's heart, who, ready to devour his enemy, suddenly stretched out his limbs and died.

Covered with blood and foam, and trembling, Grazioso seated himself on a tree which had been blown down, Fidelio dragged himself to his side without venturing to caress him, for he felt how much he had been to blame.

"Master," he said, "what is to become of us? Night is coming on, and we are far from Pæstum."

"We must go on," exclaimed the boy; and rose up, but he was so weak that he was obliged to re-seat himself.

A burning thirst consumed him; and everything swam round him. Then calling his grandmother to mind he began to weep. To have so soon forgotten all his fine promises, and to die in that country whence nobody returns, and all for the beautiful eyes of a doe! What remorse was his! How sadly this day had ended which had begun so brightly!

Soon fearful howlings were heard. It was the wolf-king's brothers who were hastening to his assistance. Grazioso embraced Fidelio, his only friend, forgave him the imprudence which they were both about to pay for with their lives, loaded his gun, prayed to the good fairies to take care of his grandmother, and prepared to die.

"Grazioso! Grazioso! where are you?" cried a little voice, which could be none other than Pensive's.

And the swallow came wheeling round and alighted on her master's head.

"Courage," she said; "the wolves are still a long way off. There is a spring close by where you can quench your thirst and bathe your wounds; and I have seen a path almost hidden by the grass that will lead us to Pæstum."

Grazioso and Fidelio dragged themselves to the brook, trembling with hope and fear; they then took the hidden path, somewhat cheered by Pensive's gentle twittering. The sun had sunk, and they walked on in the darkness for some hours, and when the moon rose they were out of danger. A painful and dangerous road remained for them to traverse, and the vigour and enthusiasm of the morning was theirs no longer; there were marshes to traverse, ditches to jump, and thickets where they tore their faces and hands; but in thinking that he might yet repair his fault and save his grandmother, Grazioso's heart was so light that with every step his strength grew with his hope. At last, after numberless fatigues, they arrived at Pæstum just as the stars marked midnight. Grazioso threw himself on a flagstone by the temple of Neptune, and after having thanked Pensive he fell asleep with Fidelio at his feet, who, though wounded and bleeding, was silent.

CHAPTER IV

HIS sleep did not last long; before daybreak he was stirring. As he came down the temple steps he saw some ants which had raised a heap of sand, and were burying the grain of the recent harvest. The entire commonwealth was in motion. Every ant was coming and going, and talking to its neighbour, receiving or giving orders, or dragging straws, bringing little bits of wood, carrying away dead flies, or collecting provisions. Every preparation was being made for the winter.

"Well," said Grazioso to the ants, "are you not going to the Castle of Life? Do you give up immortality?"

"We have worked hard," replied one of the toilers, "and now harvest is at hand. The way is long, and the future uncertain, and we are rich. It is the act of fools to count on the morrow, the wise make use of the present hour. When one has honestly amassed riches, the true philosophy is to enjoy them."

Fidelio thought the ant had some reason on its side, but as he no longer ventured to give advice, he contented himself with shaking his head as they went away. Pensive, on the contrary, said that the ant was but an egotist, and that if there was nothing better to be done than to enjoy life, the butterfly was wiser than the ant. At the same time, gayer than ever, Pensive flew off at a single flight to reconnoitre.

Grazioso walked on in silence. Ashamed of the folly of yesterday, though he regretted the doe a little, he vowed during this third day nothing should turn him from his road.

Fidelio with his torn ear followed his young master, limping, and apparently as thoughtful. Toward noon they came upon a pleasant place for making a short halt. The weather was less sultry than the preceding day, and it seemed as if the landscape and the season had altered. The road lay through meadows off which the second crop of hay had been lately taken, or through beautiful vineyards where the grapes hung in great, ripe clusters; fig-trees laden with fruit, round which hummed thousands of insects, bordered

the road; on the horizon were golden mists, and the air was soft and warm and everything invited to repose.

In one of the most beautiful meadows, near a stream which diffused a delicious freshness, Grazioso descried a herd of buffaloes, who were peacefully ruminating under the shade of some ash and plane trees. They were all lying down, and formed a ring round an old bull who looked like their leader and their king. Grazioso approached courteously, and was received with politeness. With an inclination of the head he was invited to sit down, and great bowls full of cheese and milk were placed before him. Our traveller much admired the calmness and gravity of these peaceful and powerful creatures, who looked like so many Roman senators seated in their curule chairs. The golden nose-ring they wore added to the dignity of their appearance. Grazioso, who was feeling calmer and more sedate than the preceding day, thought, in spite of himself, that it would be good to live in the midst of such peace and plenty. If happiness was to be found anywhere, no doubt it was here that it ought to be sought for. Fidelio shared his master's opinion. It was the time when quails were on the wing to Africa, and the ground was covered with exhausted birds who were recruiting their strength before crossing the sea. Fidelio had only to stoop to have splendid sport; feasted with game, he lay down at Grazioso's feet and began to snore.

When the buffaloes had finished ruminating, Grazioso, who until then had feared to be indiscreet, entered into conversation with the bull, who showed a cultivated mind and great experience.

"Are you," he enquired, "the owners of this rich domain?"

"No," replied the old buffalo, "we belong, like all the rest, to the fairy Crapaudine, Queen of the Ruby Towers, the richest of all the fairies."

"What does she require from you?" replied Grazioso.

"Nothing more than to wear a gold nose-ring, and to pay her a milk tax," answered the bull, "and at the most to give her from time to time one of our children

with whom to regale her guests. At this price we enjoy our plenty in absolute security, and we envy no one on earth, for there is not a creature happier than ourselves."

"Have you never heard of the Castle of Life and the Fountain of Immortality?" asked Grazioso timidly, who, without knowing why, blushed after putting this question.

"In our father's time," replied the bull, "there were some old men who still held to those myths, but, wiser than our elders, we know nowadays that there is no greater happiness than to sleep and ruminate."

Grazioso rose sadly to continue his journey, and enquired what were those square red towers that he saw in the distance.

"Those are the Ruby Towers," replied the bull; "they intercept the way, for you must pass by Crapaudine's Castle to continue your journey. You will see the fairy, my young friend, and she will offer you hospitality and a fortune. Do like your predecessors, believe me, they have all accepted our mistress's benefactions, and all have been well content to give up their dreams in order to live happily."

"And what has become of them?" asked Grazioso.

"They became buffaloes like us," replied the bull, quietly, who, not having finished his siesta, bent his head and fell asleep.

Grazioso star tedand awoke Fidelio, who got up growling. He then called Pensive, but she gave no answer, for she was chatting with a spider who, between two branches of an ash, had hung a great web which sparkled in the sunshine, and was full of little flies.

"Why," said the spider to the swallow, "why this long journey? What is the good changing one's climate and waiting all one's life on the sun or the weather, or one's master? Look at me, I am quite independent, and draw on my own resources. I am my own mistress, and I enjoy my skill and genius; I bring the world to my feet, and nothing disturbs my calculations or my happiness, which I owe to no one but myself."

Thrice Grazioso called Pensive, who never heard him,

she was so taken up with her new friend. Every instant some giddy little fly was caught in the web, and every time the spider like an attentive host offered the fresh spoil to its astonished companion, when suddenly there was a puff of wind; it was so light that the swallow's feathers were not even ruffled. Pensive looked for the spider; its web was scattered to the winds, and the poor creature was hanging by one leg to its last thread, when a bird carried it off as it flew past.

CHAPTER V

THEY resumed their journey in silence, and soon the party reached Crapaudine's palace. Grazioso was admitted, introduced with great ceremony by two fine greyhounds caparisoned in scarlet, and with great collars sparkling with rubies on their necks. After traversing a great number of apartments full of pictures and statues, and gold and silver stuffs, and coffers overflowing with money and jewels, Grazioso and his companions entered a circular hall, which was Crapaudine's apartment. The walls were of lapis lazuli, and the vaulted ceiling of blue enamel was supported by twelve fluted pillars of massive gold, the capitals of which were acanthus leaves in white enamel, edged with gold. On a large velvet arm-chair sat a toad as big as a rabbit; this was the presiding genius of the place. Clad in a great scarlet cloak with a spangled border, the amiable Crapaudine had on her head a diadem of rubies, whose brilliancy gave a little glow to her fat cheeks mottled with green and yellow. As soon as she caught sight of Grazioso she extended to him four be-ringed fingers, and the poor fellow was obliged, for civility's sake, to lift them to his lips as he bent them.

"Friend," said the fairy in a hoarse voice that she in vain strove to soften, "I was expecting you, and I do not wish to be less generous to you than my sisters have been. On your way here you have seen a small portion of my riches. This palace, with all its pictures, and statues, and coffers full of gold, these immense domains, and the numberless herds of cattle, all—all are yours if you choose; it only

depends on yourself to be the richest and the happiest of men."

"What must I do?" asked Grazioso, very much moved.



On a large velvet arm-chair sat a toad (P. 326)

"Less than nothing," replied the fairy; "hack me into fifty pieces, and eat me on the spot. It is not such a very terrible thing to do," she added with a smile, and, gazing at Grazioso with even redder eyes than usual, Crapaudine began to slobber pleasantly.

"Could it be possible at least to disguise your flavour?" said Pensive, who very much envied the fairy's beautiful gardens.

"No," said Crapaudine, "I must be eaten quite raw; but anybody can wander about my palace and see and touch all my treasures, and say to themselves that if they will give me this proof of devotion, everything shall be theirs."

"Master," sighed Fidelio in a beseeching voice, "only a little courage, we should be so comfortable here!"

Pensive said nothing, but her silence was eloquent. As to Grazioso, who remembered the buffaloes and their golden nose-rings, he mistrusted the fairy. Crapaudine guessed this.

"Do not believe," said she, "that I wish to deceive you, dear Grazioso. In offering you all I possess, I ask of you in return a service which I should amply reward. When you shall have accomplished the work which I propose to you, I should become a young maiden, beautiful as Venus, with the exception of my hands and feet, which will still remain those of a toad; but that is very little matter when one is rich. Already a dozen princes and a score of dukes and marquises have entreated me to marry them just as I am; but were I to become a woman it is to you I would give the preference, and together we will enjoy my immense wealth. Do not blush for your poverty, for you have about you a treasure worth all of mine—the flask that my sister gave you," and she stretched out her clammy hand to seize the talisman.

"Never," cried Grazioso, stepping backward. "Never, I desire neither wealth nor ease. I will leave this place and go on to the Castle of Life."

"Unhappy wretch, that you shall never do!" exclaimed the fairy in a rage.

Immediately the temple disappeared, a circle of flames surrounded Grazioso, and an invisible clock struck midnight. On the first stroke the traveller was startled, at the second without a moment's hesitation he threw himself headlong into the midst of the flames. To die for his grandmother seemed to Grazioso his only means of showing his repentance and his love.

CHAPTER VI

TO Grazioso's surprise the fire dispersed without touching him, and he found himself all at once in a new country, with his two companions beside him.

It was no longer Italy, but rather Russia, or somewhere in the ends of the earth. Grazioso had lost his way on a mountain covered with snow. Around him he saw nothing but great trees covered with hoar-frost, and half hidden by a damp and penetrating fog which froze him to his marrow. His feet sank into the soaked earth at every step, and to heighten the wretchedness he had to descend a steep incline, at the foot of which a torrent was to be heard dashing itself against the rocks. Grazioso took his dagger and cut the branch of a tree to support his faltering steps. Fidelio, his tail between his legs, barked feebly, while Pensive never left her master's shoulder; her ruffled feathers were covered with little icicles. The poor thing was half dead, but she encouraged Grazioso, and never murmured.

When, after infinite trouble, they reached the foot of the mountain, Grazioso found a river with huge blocks of ice, which dashed one against the other, and were whirled round in the current. This river, which had to be crossed, had neither bridge nor boat, and no help was at hand.

"Master," said Fidelio, "I can go no farther. Shame on the fairy that placed me in your service and made me out of nothing!"

Having said this, he lay down on the ground, and did not stir. In vain Grazioso strove to cheer him, and called him his companion and his friend. All that the poor dog could do was to respond for the last time to his master's caresses by licking his hand and wagging his tail; then his limbs stiffened, and he was dead.

Grazioso took Fidelio in his arms to carry him to the Castle of Life, and then stepped boldly on to one of the blocks of ice, followed by Pensive. With his stick he pushed the frail raft into the middle of the stream, which bore it along with frightful rapidity.

"Master," said Pensive, "do you hear the sound of the

sea? We are going toward an abyss which will swallow us up. Give me one last caress and say farewell."

"No," said Grazioso; "why should the fairies have deceived me? Perhaps the shore is near here; very likely the sun is shining above the clouds. Fly upward, dear Pensive; perhaps above the mist and fog you will find light, and may see the Castle of Life."

Pensive spread her half-frozen wings and courageously flew up through the cold and fog. For an instant Grazioso could follow the sound of her flight, then silence supervened, while the ice-block continued its headlong course through the darkness. For a long time Grazioso awaited her return, but at last when he felt himself alone hope deserted him, and he lay down to await death on that frail block of ice. From time to time a vivid flash of lightning traversed the cloud, and dreadful claps of thunder were to be heard. It was as if the end of the world had come. All at once, in the midst of his despair and his forlornness, Grazioso heard the cry of a swallow, and Pensive dropped at his feet.

"Master, master!" she said, "you were right. I have seen the shore; the dawn is up there. Courage!"

So saying, she spread her tired wings convulsively, and then lay motionless and lifeless.

Grazioso started up, placed the poor bird who had sacrificed herself for him on his heart, and with a superhuman effort pushed the ice-block forward to find at last safety or destruction. Suddenly he was aware of the sound of the sea, the roaring of which became nearer and nearer. He fell on his knees, and closing his eyes, awaited death.

A high wave like a mountain broke over his head and threw him unconscious on the shore, where no living man had been before him.

CHAPTER VII

WHEN Grazioso regained his consciousness, ice, clouds and darkness had all disappeared. He was lying on the ground in a smiling country, where the trees were bathed in a clear light. Facing him was a beautiful castle, from



It was the Fountain of Immortality (P. 313)

which a stream descended swiftly to the sea, which was as blue and clear and calm as the sky. Grazioso gazed around him; he was alone—alone with the remains of his two friends, which the wave had carried to the shore with him. Worn out with all he had suffered and gone through, he dragged himself to the stream, and as he bent over the water to moisten his parched lips, he started back in horror. It was not his own face he saw in the water, but that of an old man with white hair who was like him. He turned round; no one was behind him. Again he approached the spring, and again he saw the old man, or rather there was no doubt the old man was himself. "Great powers!" he exclaimed, "I now understand you. You wanted my life instead of my grandmother's. Joyfully I accept the sacrifice!" and without further troubling himself about his old age and his wrinkles, he plunged his head into the stream and drank greedily.

On rising, he was surprised to see himself the same as he was the day he quitted home—younger, his hair blacker, and his eyes brighter than ever. He took up his hat, which had fallen near the water, and a drop of it had by accident touched it. O wonder! the butterfly which he had stuck on it moved its wings and tried to fly away. Grazioso ran to the shore to take up *Fidelio* and *Pensive*, and plunged them into the blessed stream. *Pensive* escaped, uttering a little cry of joy, and flew off to the castle heights, while *Fidelio*, shaking the water from his ears, ran to the stable-yard of the palace, whence issued some splendid watch-dogs, which, instead of barking at the new arrival, made him welcome as an old friend. It was the Fountain of Immortality that Grazioso had at last found, or rather the stream which issued from it, though its miraculous powers were already very much weakened, and gave at most but two or three hundred years of life to those who drank it.

Grazioso filled his flask with this wonder-working water, and went on to the palace. His heart was beating, for still one last trial remained for him; success was so near, he feared the more to fail. Ascending the flight of steps of the castle, he found it all shut up and silent, and there was no one to receive the traveller. As he was on the last step,

ready to knock at the door, a voice more gentle than severe arrested him.

"Hast thou loved?" asked the invisible voice.

"Yes," replied Grazioso, "I have loved my grandmother better than aught else in the world."

The door opened sufficiently to let his hand through.

"Hast thou suffered for her whom thou lovest?" returned the voice.

"I have suffered," said Grazioso, "very much by my own fault no doubt, but a little also for her whom I sought to save."

The door half opened, and the young fellow could see an infinite perspective of wood and water, and a sky more beautiful than any in his dreams.

"Hast thou always done thy duty?" went on a voice in a grave tone.

"Alas, no!" replied Grazioso, falling on his knees; "but when I failed I have been punished by my remorse more even than by the hard trials I have gone through. Forgive me, and if I have not yet expiated all my faults, punish me as I deserve, but save her whom I love; preserve my grandmother for me."

Immediately the door was thrown wide open, though Grazioso saw no one. Wild with joy he entered a courtyard surrounded by arcades covered with foliage, and in the midst was a fountain which sprang out of a bed of the most beautiful flowers, larger and sweeter than any earthly ones. Near the fountain was a lady clad in white, of noble appearance, who looked about forty years of age. She walked toward Grazioso, and welcomed him with so gentle a smile that he felt deeply moved and tears sprang to his eyes.

"Dost thou not know me?" said the lady to Grazioso

"Oh, Grandmother, is it thou?" he exclaimed, "how didst thou come to the Castle of Life!"

"My son," she said, pressing him to her bosom, "she who brought me here is a more powerful fairy than the fairies of the woods and water. I shall return no more to Salerno; I am receiving here the reward of what little good I have done in the enjoyment of a happiness which time will never diminish."

"And me, Grandmother," exclaimed Grazioso, "what will become of me? After having seen thee here, how can I go back there to suffer in solitude?"

"Dear son," she replied, "one can no longer live on earth after tasting the heavenly delights of this place. Thou hast lived, dear Grazioso, and life has nothing further to teach thee. More fortunate than I, thou hast traversed in four days the desert in which I have languished for four-score years. Henceforth nothing can separate us."

The door then closed, and since then nothing more has been heard of Grazioso and his grandmother.

In vain the King of Naples has sought for the palace and the enchanted fountain in Calabria; they have never again been found on earth. But if we listen to the language of the stars, and attend to what they tell us every evening as they send forth their gentle rays, we shall know where the Castle of Life and the Fountain of Immortality are really to be found.

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